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FOURTEEN SERMONS

ON SEVERAL INTERESTING

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

BY

JOHN BAXTER PIKE.

LONDON:
Printed for the AUTHOR.

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SERMON I.

The true Uſe, and common Abuſe, of earthly Purſuits.

Eccleſiaſtes, Chapter xii. Verſe 8.

Vanity of vanities! ſaith the preacher, All is Vanity!

THIS ſolemn aſſertion is delivered by one, who in all ages, has been univerſally eſteemed, one of the wiſeſt of mankind; and his veracity is unqueſtionable, when he aſſures us, that it is not the reſult of mere ſpeculation. It is not the ill-natured concluſion of

one who had no opportunity of trying the enjoyments of life, nor is it the melancholy declaration of a gloomy, and unſociable mind. On the contrary, the preacher was of the moſt lively, chearful, and gay temper; naturally diſpoſed to give the fulleſt ſcope to enjoyment; and providence (perhaps for the good of mankind, that they might reap benefit from the reſult of his leſſons;) had placed him in ſo elevated, and powerful a ſituation; that he could, at all times, and inſtantly, command every earthly ſatisfaction. And he gave no limits to the extent of his reſearches. He examined all the delights of the world, and proved them fairly, and fully; and at length delivered this inference, as the reſult of the moſt complete experience: "*Vanity of vanities, All is Vanity!*" There is a beautiful ſtrength of expreſſion in the Hebrew language, which in many inſtances, is capable of being preſerved in the tranſlation; as in the preſent moſt

moſt expreſſive repetition. "*Vanity of vanities!*" which certainly conveys a much more forcible idea, than if he had barely aſſerted, "*All is Vanity!*" And it is remarkable, that in all the books of Holy Scripture, theſe moſt forcible beauties of fine writing, always introduce ſome ſubject of vaſt importance, and are ever deſigned to arreſt, and engage the whole attention; as in this inſtance, what can be a more intereſting information, to creatures who are rapidly paſſing through a ſhort duration, and have everlaſting intereſts to ſucceed; than to be aſſured, that all mere earthly purſuits are vanity in the ſtrongeſt ſenſe, even *vanity of vanities?*

To grow wiſe from the experience of others, is the higheſt degree of wiſdom: yet, alas, it is a wiſdom, but ſeldom found among mankind! It is in vain that wiſdom may lift up her voice in the ſtreets: We are all ſadly diſpoſed to try for ourſelves, and like

Solomon, to know folly by experience. Nay many will even drink deep of the bitter draught of vice, before they will be convinced of its bitterneſs.

Reader, you have moſt probably been partaker of this general folly, and you have probably learned ſo much from this experience, as will induce you readily to fall in with the preacher's aſſertion, when properly explained, and laid before you. I pray GOD you may learn to practiſe the leſſons which reſult from ſuch a conviction.

The common purſuits of mankind are uſually, either Power, Riches, Knowledge, Fame, Splendor, or Pleaſure; and theſe, among others, he declares to be *vanity of vanities.* Yet theſe are all good in themſelves, ſince GOD has ordained them all, and the Preacher himſelf, has elſewhere aſſerted the propriety of them, and declared that *to every thing there is a* proper *ſeaſon,*

and

and a time to every purpoſe under the heaven. As there is " *a time to be born, and a time to die;*" ſo there is " *a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to get, and a time to loſe; a time to keep ſilence, and a time to ſpeak; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.*" Eccleſ. Ch. iii. v. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6. It follows then, that it is not Power, Riches, Knowledge, Fame, Splendor, or Pleaſure, which are thus unfavorably diſtinguiſhed; but the *inordinate* love of them, the *immoderate* purſuit of them; the giving the whole ſoul up to them, to the neglect of our more important concerns; and inſtead of uſing them conſcientiouſly, and improving them to the glory of GOD, and the advantage of mankind; ſetting them up as idols to ourſelves.—Yet this is the common, and fooliſh conduct of mankind. As it was anciently ſaid to the infatuated children of Iſrael, when paying their adorations to the vain Image of a ſenſeleſs calf, " *Theſe are thy Gods,*

Gods, O Iſrael." So may the meſſengers of truth, when looking on mankind around them, addreſs even *chriſtian* hearers, with equal propriety; "*Theſe* are your Gods, O Chriſtians! Power is your God, Riches is your God, Knowledge, Fame, Splendor, or Pleaſure is your God. You dedicate all your time to them: Your whole powers are devoted to their ſervice, and you follow them, with an avidity as keen as if they could make you happy. You ſtrangely imagine that they can do ſo; yet of a truth you ſhall find, that *thus* purſued, they are empty as the idols of the heathen, even *vanity of vanities.*

To point out to you wherein this vanity conſiſts, I will briefly examine theſe common purſuits of erring man; and ſhew, as I proceed, how they are uſually abuſed, and how they might be improved, ſo as to ſecure very excellent advantages from them.

With

With reſpect to *Power*, a very little obſervation will convince us, that they whoſe aim is to attain it, will ſeldom ſpare any means by which they may accompliſh their end. What is the hiſtory of the whole world, but a melancholy chronicle of the wickedneſs of mankind, in order to attain dominion over each other? To read it muſt fill a thoughtful, a humane, and religious mind with horror, and make even the blood run chill. What baſeneſs has not been repeatedly practiſed, varied in all the thouſand ſhapes which ſin can aſſume, or the devil invent? What treacheries, what perjuries, what violations of every tender tie; ſuch as the lion, or the bear; the tyger, or the wolf; thoſe ſavage beaſts of violence and prey, would never have committed? What oceans of blood have deluged the earth, in all ages, that ſome diſtinguiſhed ruffian might obtain the empty name of conquering, and reigning over, the wretched remaining inhabitants of widely depopulated countries! And

perhaps

perhaps the wretch has ſucceeded. By opening the various ſluices of woe, by tearing thouſands of affectionate children from their unhappy parents, who perhaps depended on them, not only for ſolace, but ſupport; by filling a wretched land with widows, and crying orphans, he has at length obtained the maſtery, and beings infinitely better than himſelf, are obliged to bow beneath the iron hand of his oppreſſion. Here is the end of Power wickedly obtained, and uſed. It can go no further. What then is the mighty reward which it brings to its poſſeſſor? Why, it brings the hatred, and execrations of the multitude, and what is infinitely worſe, the prayers of the righteous are turned againſt him, and become the ſureſt weapons of his deſtruction; for *the LORD heareth them who are his, and will deliver them; the LORD will break the rod of the oppreſſor;* and inſtead of the immortal memorial which he fooliſhly coveted, the GOD of the upright ſhall

laugh

laugh him to ſcorn, and *make even his name to periſh.* Or if it is tranſmitted to poſterity, it ſhall be tranſmitted with infamy; and probably be uſed as a proverb of wickedneſs. Surely this is worſe than vanity.

But in all ſocieties, for the ſake of good government, it is proper, and even neceſſary, that power ſhould be lodged ſomewhere; and there are many who poſſeſs it, who have not obtained it by any cruel or indirect methods; yet if theſe purſue it only for its own ſake, that they may pleaſe the pride of their hearts, by conſidering themſelves as elevated above their brethren; what is the reward it will bring to them, when their ſhort poſſeſſion of it draws near to its concluſion? At beſt, the bitter reflection, that they have followed an empty earthly phantom, which muſt now vaniſh away, and be as though it had never been; and that in the keen purſuit of this, they have neglected to

ſecure a dignity, which would have remained with them for ever; that inſtead of a glorious everlaſting diſtinction, and ſhining *as the ſtars in the firmament for ever, and ever;* if the mercy of GOD through a REDEEMER at all admits them to the abodes of bliſs, they muſt, at beſt, be contented to be *leaſt in the kingdom of heaven.* Surely Power, ſo poſſeſſed, is *vanity of vanities.*

But as it is a neceſſary thing, and as the particular providence of GOD places ſome in ſtations of power, it is plain, that it is a talent committed to their truſt by him, and may be uſed to his glory. If they who poſſeſs it, will uſe it to deſtroy oppreſſion; to reſiſt, and ſubdue evil; to bleſs mankind, by removing their miſeries, by eſtabliſhing, and preſerving order, and harmony among them; and by teaching them the pure law of loving kindneſs, and peace; they will improve it to the utmoſt, and uſe it to the glory of GOD. It will not then

then be vanity to them; but will become a ſource of unſpeakable comfort, when the real vanities of the world are departing from them. The LORD will *lift up the light of his countenance upon* them; and in this reſpect, beſtow them the tokens of his favor.

Another purſuit is *Riches*, a talent almoſt univerſally deſired, and as univerſally abuſed. Some men ſeek after them with all their ſouls; and continually purſue them, with the moſt unremitting ardor; in order that they may ſupply them with the means of every gratification wherein they delight; while others appear to purſue them merely for their own ſake; that they may poſſeſs the mighty ſatisfaction of adding heap to heap, and ſcraping up abundance of what they never have a heart to uſe. Men of both theſe deſcriptions, will too frequently ruſh into crimes even of the deepeſt dye; or continue habitually, in the commiſſion of ſuch

actions as are a diſgrace to the feelings of humanity; that they may aggrandize their uſeleſs ſtores. Alas, how frequently, and how fatally, has the luſt of gold hardened the human heart; and been the cauſe of the vileſt acts of baſeneſs, and oppreſſion; violence and blood! and ah, how generally, if we look round the world, do we behold the iron hand of avarice, ſtretched out to ſeize its univerſal prey! Some, as Job ſtrongly expreſſes it, "*remove the land-*
"*marks, and violently take away flocks, and*
"*feed thereof; they drive away the aſs of*
"*the fatherleſs, they take the widows ox for*
"*a pledge; they turn the needy out of the*
"*way, they cauſe the naked to lodge with-*
"*out clothing, and to embrace the rock for*
"*want of a ſhelter; they pluck the father-*
"*leſs from the breaſt, and take a pledge of*
"*the poor; they cauſe the naked to go with-*
"*out clothing, and take away the ſheaf*
"*from the hungry; even thoſe hungry ſouls,*
"*who make oil within their walls, and tread*
"*their wine preſſes; yet ſuffer thirſt.*"

Theſe

Theſe are but few of the evils, which the immoderate love of riches has introduced into the world. The flinty heart of man can become callous to every tender impreſſion, and can deviſe innumerable ways of grinding the face of the poor. The eye can, unmoved, behold their miſeries; and the faſt cloſed hand refuſe the ſmalleſt pittance to the earneſt petitions of diſtreſs. Surely this alſo is worſe than vanity, yea it is *a ſore evil;* for ſuch *riches are gained, and kept, for the* temporary *owners thereof, to their hurt.* What ſhall they profit them when GOD taketh away their ſouls? *Naked ſhall they return, as they came into the world; and ſhall take nothing of their labor, which they may carry away in their hand.* Nay what will be infinitely worſe, there will be a dreadful account behind. Surely this is buying even gold too dear. This is not vanity of vanities only, but the direſt *vexation of ſpirit.*

But

But undoubtedly, there are many who poſſeſs riches obtained without violence, or oppreſſion; yet *there is an evil, which I have ſeen under the ſun; and it is common among men; a man to whom GOD hath given riches, wealth, and honor; ſo that he wanteth nothing for his ſoul of all that he deſireth, yet GOD giveth him not power to eat thereof.*" His narrow ſoul cannot allow, even to himſelf, the ſatisfactions which his abundance might procure for thouſands. And the expreſſion of the preacher, that *GOD giveth him not power to eat thereof,*" ſeems to mean, that the judgment of GOD will thus puniſh him. As he will not uſe, and improve the talent as he ought, by *drawing out his ſoul to the hungry, and ſatisfying the afflicted with bread,* he ſhall not himſelf receive the benefits which he otherwiſe might enjoy, until his riches *periſh by evil travail*; or until he is called to give up the dreadful account of his ſtewardſhip.

Yet

Yet what an amazing good might riches be to the owners of them, if they were properly improved to the utmoſt. Find me the rare character, who covets to be rich by every equitable, and commendable method; only that he may become rich in good works; and you will find him, in whoſe poſſeſſion, riches are not vanity, but a ſubſtantial good; and to whom, therefore, they ſhall by no means bring vexation of ſpirit, but ſhall become a ſource of exceeding joy.

To him, whoſe generous ſoul, like the benevolent Job, hath never *witheld the poor from their deſire, or cauſed the eyes of the widow to fail; who hath never eaten his morſel by himſelf alone, and the fatherleſs hath not eaten thereof; who hath never ſeen any periſh for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; who hath chearfully opened his doors to the traveller, ſo that the ſtranger did not lodge in the ſtreet; who hath not deſpiſed the cauſe of his man ſervant, or his maid ſervant; but has ever delivered*

livered the poor who cried, and the fatherleſs, and him who had none to help him; who hath *broken the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the ſpoil out of his teeth.*" To ſuch a one riches are indeed an important bleſſing; a ſource of the fineſt, and moſt exquiſite delight. How rapturous the ſenſation, when *the bleſſing of him who was ready to periſh* cometh on the head of the benevolent man, and he *cauſes the widow's heart to ſing for joy!* What are the paltry, groveling ſatisfactions of the contracted ſoul? What the adding heap to heap, or field to field, compared with this heavenly pleaſure? A pleaſure which ſhall be extended even to eternity, for unſpeakable muſt be the comfort in a dying hour, of having faithfully endeavored to improve the talents of heaven, and imitate the bright example of our benign REDEEMER; who ever went about ſeeking occaſions of doing good, and who *left us his example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps.*

Riches therefore extenſively uſed to the glory of GOD, and the advantage of mankind, are an important bleſſing; but when abuſed to evil purpoſes, (as they too commonly are,) or negligently, and ſlothfully appropriated to inſignificant objects; they are in themſelves *vanity*, and become to the guilty poſſeſſors of them, a dangerous, and too often, a *fatal* ſnare.

Knowledge is alſo the favorite purſuit of ſome; and a moſt commendable purſuit it is, when engaged in, from proper motives; and followed with ſuitable intentions, and actions.

To ſearch out, and examine the ways, and works of the GREAT CREATOR, is an employment entirely ſuited to his rational offſpring; and may be one moſt powerful mean, of exciting in our ſouls, the moſt ſublime, and reverential ideas of GOD; the moſt awful ſenſe of his

greatneſs, infinite perfection, holineſs, and juſtice; and the greateſt degree of love, and warmeſt gratitude for the innumerable inſtances of his kindneſs to us. Learning, when ſanctified by religion, is one of the greateſt of bleſſings. The more extenſive our knowledge is, the more ſhall we ſee of our ignorance, and the more will our humility be encreaſed; but learning without religion is too often vanity indeed. When the petulance of fancied ſcholarſhip, fills the fooliſh heart with pride, and induces the poor mortal to look with contempt on his brethren, and value himſelf for his attainments; he becomes truly deſerving of pity from every ſober mind. When he forgets how much error muſt unavoidably adhere to all human knowledge, how imperfect is the ſoundeſt judgment, and how weak the ſtrongeſt underſtanding among men; he does not uſe, but pervert the little knowledge which he has acquired. It is then indeed

deed *vanity of vanities;* for if he does not ſtrive to improve it, by inſtructing the ignorant, and reclaiming the vicious; it can be of no real uſe whatever; and ere long the boaſted ſon of learning muſt drop into the duſt, and all his thoughts periſh.

And with reſpect to *Fame*, another favorite purſuit, how ſhort is the blaſt of her trumpet! How ſoon ſhall her loudeſt encomiums be huſhed to perpetual ſilence! The ſtoried urn, the animated buſt, the ſolid braſs, or ſumptuous marble, may tranſmit the table of flattery to ſucceeding generations; while the unconſcious remains lie diſſolving in corruption below, and perhaps, the wretched ſpirit is with the devil and his angels. At length the ſolid braſs ſhall fail, the marble moulder, and become unfaithful to its truſt; and every memorial of the poor vain creature be for ever obliterated; till the awful diſco-

veries of the judgment day ſhall diſcloſe his actions, words, thoughts, and motives; with all their circumſtances; and ſhew, in truer colors than the funereal monument, or the partial page of hiſtory; what was his real character. Alas how poor a vanity is this!

Come then, let us haſten to the delights of the ſons of men, to *Pleaſure* of every ſort. And here, we may ſafely take our account from the preacher, whoſe ſituation, and opulence, enabled him to take deeper draughts than can poſſibly be taken by moſt of the ſons of men. "*I ſaid in my heart,*" ſaith Solomon; "*go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleaſure.*" He *ſought to give himſelf to wine, and to lay hold on* every *folly*, till he ſhould diſcover, by experience, *what is that* great *Good, for the ſons of men, which they ſhould do under the heaven, all the days of their lives.* But to drown his reaſon in intemperance,

was

was too low and deſpicable. *Of* the *laughter* of the drunkard he ſaid *it is madneſs, of* the *mirth* of intoxication, *what doth it?* What pleaſure can it afford?

Nor could great works, ſplendid palaces, and celebrated gardens; extenſive vineyards, and orchards; ſtored with all the variety that luxury could deſire, give the felicity he ſought.

Vain was the flattering attendance of ſervants and maidens. The ſervile croud felt leſs unhappineſs than their unjuſtly envied maſter. Vain was the pageantry of ſtate, the pomp of power; and equally vain his great poſſeſſions. Nor could the captivating charms of muſic, or the pleaſures of ſenſe or elegance; afford the heart ſatisfying delight which he ſo eagerly purſued. It was all limited, tranſitory, and empty as the ſhadow. The immortal ſpirit within

within panted for ſomething more ſuited to its nature, and therefore, all theſe alſo, (though innocent in themſelves, and bleſſings, if rightly and moderately uſed;) were found inadequate to ſupply his wants.

Theſe when purſued as a *firſt* object, will ever appear to be *vanity of vanities;* and certainly bring diſappointment, and *vexation of ſpirit.*

And like theſe, all other purſuits, ſo far as they are limited in their nature, or tranſient in their duration; and reſpect only the concerns of time, muſt alſo be, at beſt, but *vanity of vanities.*

What then, is there no real ſubſtantial good for the children of men to purſue all the days of their lives? Yes, there undoubtedly is. A Good which has no vanity in its nature, no vexation as its conſequence; which ſhall *fill* the ſoul, ſhall

ſatisfy

ſatisfy its utmoſt cravings; and continue its ſatisfying fulneſs for ever. Hear then *the concluſion of the whole matter. To fear GOD, and keep his commandments,* ſhall adminiſter the happineſs ſo eagerly ſought. *This is the whole* duty, this is the whole felicity *of man.* This comprehends the proper uſe, and improvement, of all the talents already mentioned; and which the miſtaken ſons of men too frequently abuſe.

To explain what is meant by fearing GOD, and keeping his commandments, by way of informing your underſtandings; is, I truſt, needleſs. Probably moſt of you know more than you practiſe. You all know, if you will coolly conſider it, that a great deal more is contained therein; than the lukewarm, lazy chriſtians, of the preſent age, are willing to allow. Let me then briefly exhort you not to go with the multitude, not to imitate their ſlothful manners, not to follow

low vanity, not to abuſe the talents of GOD; but to *work while it is day*, like true followers of JESUS CHRIST, as wiſely remembering, that *the night cometh* ſpeedily, *wherein no man can work.*

So far therefore, as ye are called to glorify GOD, to edify one another, and to *work out your own ſalvation;* take the advice of the preacher: *Whatſoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither ye are going.* All your opportunities will then be cut off for ever, and ye muſt then receive, either, what is infinitely worſe than vanity, even the bittereſt *vexation of ſpirit*; or what as much exceed all earthly delights, even *the joy of your LORD.*

The LORD give you this wiſdom which cometh from above. The LORD lift up the light of his countenance upon you,

you, and teach you to walk *as children of the light, redeeming the time*, improving your talents, and glorifying him, in the the midſt of a crooked, and perverſe generation. *The LORD beſtow upon you the bleſſing of peace!*

SERMON II.

Leſſons of Wiſdom deducible from the Conduct of the Ant.

Proverbs, Chapter vi. Verſe 6.

Go to the ant, thou ſluggard; conſider her ways, and be wiſe.

THE chief uſe of the creatures is, that by inveſtigating their nature, we ſhould not only learn the amazing power, wiſdom, goodneſs, and excellency, of the GREAT MAKER of all; but that in their conduct, we ſhould alſo read thoſe important leſſons of duty, concerning which we too often ſtand in need of a friendly remembrance.

GOD has given even the mute animals, and the moſt inſignificant (as they are deemed) of the reptile creation, as teachers to us; to lower the innate pride of the human heart, and to ſtir up every ſpark of ingenuous ſhame in us; by ſhewing us, that they conſtantly purſue the path appointed them by the GREAT CREATOR, and fulfil the deſigns of his providence; while we, alas! are ever flying wide from the mark which he hath ſet us, and deviating from the great end of our being.

The plaineſt, and moſt familiar methods of inſtruction, or admonition, are indiſputably the beſt; becauſe they cannot but be underſtood, and therefore, are moſt extenſively uſeful; and theſe are the methods every where adopted in the Holy Scriptures. The inſpired writers of the *old* Teſtament, like our bleſſed REDEEMER, and his apoſtles, in the *new;* ſeize every common occurrence, and uſual appearance of

of nature, as they paſs on; which are adapted to the capacities, and ſubject to the daily obſervation of plain men. And from theſe obvious ſubjects, they continually ſtrike out the moſt beautiful, as well as important leſſons. Thus the birds of the air, the beaſts of the field, the trees of the garden, or foreſt; the numerous flowery tribes which enamel the mead, and even the graſs which covers the ſod we tread on, are perpetual monitors to man. Nay, even the little ant, when pointed out by the Holy Spirit of inſpiration, and diligently obſerved by us; becomes a moſt ſublime teacher of the greateſt truths; even thoſe of the moſt intereſting nature, wherein our whole happineſs conſiſts.

Thus has our benign CREATOR, even in this reſpect alſo, exerciſed the tendereſt care, towards his highly favored, but continually erring children. He hath ſo encircled us on every ſide, with ſilent, but moſt expreſſive friends;

that

that we cannot take a ſingle ſtep out of the path of duty, but we are inſtantly confronted with ten thouſand forcible admonitions from every thing around us. All nature unites in the general and friendly advice, *O man be wiſe!*

The ſon of pride may lift up his head, and diſdain to receive, even the beſt ſervices of friendſhip, from a creature, which he too inſultingly ſpurns beneath his feet, and cruſhes on the ground he walks on; but let him be informed, that man forgets himſelf, when he preſumes to deſpiſe the ſmalleſt of the works of GOD. Let him be told alſo, that GOD has thought fit to dignify this little animal with the office of his inſtructor; nay more, with that of his perpetual monitor; for we are not commanded to conſider our ways, that we may increaſe our knowledge; but our wiſdom, by reducing our knowledge to practice.

And herein, this little but moſt conſummate teacher inſtructs us, not by word, but by the moſt convincing and attractive force of a regular, uniform *example.*

Come then, my brethren: let us withdraw our eyes from the ſick'ning pomps, and vanities of this world. Let us deſcend to the habitation of induſtry, and care; and while the conſcious bluſh reddens on our cheeks, let us recollect the too long forgotten maxims of wiſdom.

Behold the induſtrious creatures, with what conſtant, uninterrupted, ſettled attention, they purſue the object in view! Their great end is to provide for futurity, not only to ſupply their preſent neceſſities, but to lay up in ſtore a plentiful, and comfortable proviſion for the rigid ſeaſon of winter; when their opportunities will all be paſſed; and nothing but their former foreſight,

and

and prudent diligence; can ſave them from periſhing. And herein the moſt accurate obſerver of nature will never find them fail. This little people never ſtarve, in conſequence of their former negligence; but are always found careful, and diligent, to *lay up a good foundation againſt the time to come.*

What a ſtriking leſſon is this to vain, and erring man! How forcibly does it inſtruct him to reſiſt the indolence of his nature, and alſo to direct his *whole* attention to that which is his chief good! The inſtructive animal never turns aſide, never remits in her diligence, to follow any inferior purſuit; but alas! how greatly do mankind, the ſons of boaſted reaſon, and lords of the creation, ſuffer by a compariſon with this little creature! How do we ſee men (as an infant in purſuit of a butterfly) continually deviating from the path of duty, to follow ſuch ſenſeleſs bawbles, ſuch tranſient toys, as are beneath the

the notice of a rational mind, and even periſh in the uſing!

The conduct of the ant holds out unto us a leſſon for this world, as well as the other; but as ſpiritual, and eternal things ſo infinitely exceed all the fleeting concerns of this life, and as man's greateſt good lies far beyond the ſkies, I chuſe to confine the improvement of the preſent ſubject to our moſt important concerns.

We have ſeen that the great end of our minute inſtructors purſuit is to provide for futurity. Let us more particularly examine her conduct, and we ſhall probably ſee in the ſtrongeſt light, the beautiful propriety of her winning example, and the great excellence of her wiſdom.

While uſing her utmoſt endeavors to ſecure her great object, ſhe is no loiterer, or trifler. She improves the ſummer,

being the proper ſeaſon, when there are no obſtructions in her way to impede her courſe; when the genial glow of the ſeaſon enlivens her ſpirits; when the mildeſt, and moſt tranquil ſkies ſmile on her from above; and the ways below are ſmooth and clean. This is the ſeaſon which is beſt adapted to labor, and this ſhe carefully improves to the utmoſt. Nay, ſuch is the ardent deſire of theſe creatures to finiſh the work which GOD has given them to do, that they may be continually ſeen, during the ſummer, working by moonlight.

What a moſt preſſing admonition is this to us to ſeize the *preſent* opportunity! Life is our ſeaſon of action, in which we alſo are to provide for an awful futurity. That ſeaſon is rapidly, though ſilently departing, and ah! ſhould it ſlide away unimproved, before we have laid up our treaſure in heaven; what chearing aid, what comfortable ſupport, can we experience, when

when our neglected *harveſt is paſſed*, and our ſlighted *ſummer is ended!* But youth is the ſmiling part of that ſeaſon, when with peculiar advantage we may attend to our beſt intereſts: While our powers are in their fulleſt vigor, while health mantles on our cheek, and the natural gaiety of our tender age ſpreads a kind of conſtant ſunſhine all around us: Then may we beſt apply ourſelves with full purpoſe to the work given us by Providence.

Surely our difficulties ſhall be much more eaſily ſubdued, while we are capable of *running* in the path of duty, than they poſſibly can be, when the decrepitude, and languors of age overtake us, and thoſe ſad years are advanced wherein we ſhall ſay, "*we have no pleaſure in them.*"

If our great work is neglected till this ſeaſon of weakneſs comes on, we ſhall find that as our powers have been

gradually impaired, our difficulties have encreaſed; and inſtead of the ſweet ſunſhine of youth; which enlivened our ſouls; ſupported, and kept them freſh for labor; we ſhall feel our hearts ſinking within us, under the oppreſſive gloom of the approaching winter.

Neither is the little animal, whoſe wonderful conduct we are now ſcrutinizing, turned aſide from her employment, by any uncomfortable circumſtance which may ariſe. Though the ſun may advance with burning heat, and dart his ſcorching rays full on her head; ſtill ſhe moves on with a ſteady, unabating diligence, and bears the burden and heat of the day. How does the inſect ſhame the chriſtian world! Bluſh ye ſilken ſons of chriſtianity, ye *polite* diſciples of JESUS, who can only condeſcend to look toward heaven, while ye recline upon the downy lap of eaſe. Ye forget that your maſter was *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted*

quainted with griefs. Ye ſurely forget that *through much tribulation, ye muſt inherit the promiſes.* Come, O come to this divine teacher, and let even the ant inſtruct you in the chearing aſſertion of the apoſtle, that "*in due ſeaſon ye ſhall reap, if ye faint not.*"

Nor can the blandiſhments of pleaſure, ſeduce her from her purſuit; or in the leaſt degree, leſſen her attention, or ſlacken her diligence: The idle graſshopper may ſing away the precious ſeaſon, and ſkip in uſeleſs levity along the mead: She ſtops not to liſten. The unheeded ſong has no faſcinating charms for her. She is deaf to its enticements as the grain ſhe carries, and unmoved purſues her ſteady courſe.

Would to GOD ſuch was the wiſdom of the human race! But O how often do we ſee, even thoſe who have begun to run well, turn aſide to the deluſions which abound in the world!

Pleaſure,

Pleaſure, as a ſkilful deſtroyer, ſpreads her fine ſpun net in every part of our way. The wily fiend aſſumes every ſpecious appearance; uſes every ſtratagem, and cunningly plants her concealed ſnares; and O how numerous are the unhappy victims who fall into her pit, and never riſe again!

Would to GOD the wiſdom of the ant ſo poſſeſſed our minds, that nothing could draw us aſide from the *one thing needful!*

We have now followed our little monitor to her granary. We have ſeen, and admired her unremitting diligence in providing for futurity. She has laid up her treaſure in a proper receptacle. But ſtill her wiſdom ends not here. She exerciſes much ſkill in forming her habitation. The way to her apartments is not ſtrait; but made with many windings, and turnings; by which ſhe prudently guards againſt cold, and wet.

She

She forms cavities in the earth below her heaps of grain; that in caſe any water ſhould enter, it may not damage her ſtock, but drain away, and ſink into the earth, and be loſt. And not to be wanting, in any reſpect, in her foreſight, and prudence, ſhe bites off the bud from every grain, and thereby prevents all poſſibility of its ſpoiling by the power of vegetation. Can we behold ſuch circumſpection, ſuch attentive forecaſt; without heaving a ſigh, or dropping a tear for the conduct of mankind? Would they but uſe the ſame caution againſt the poſſible events of time, how much evil would be unknown in the world! By conſidering, and avoiding the probable circumſtances of temptation, and thus cutting off the occaſions of evil; the chriſtian would eſcape many a fiery conflict. Much ſin againſt his CREATOR, and much ſtinging remorſe in his own mind, would thereby be prevented.

Cold,

Cold, and wet, are evils which in their nature, prove fatal to theſe animals; and therefore, the GOD who made them, has inſtructed them, not to expoſe themſelves, in an unneceſſary manner, to thoſe evils which they cannot ſurmount. They therefore, continue ſafe under the comfortable ſhelter of their habitations, during the whole winter; and unleſs ſome rude foot has diſturbed their peaceful dwelling, or ſome urgent occaſion renders it abſolutely neceſſary; not an ant is to be ſeen abroad, till the revigorating warmth of the ſun is returned, and they can venture out in ſafety. The improvement is obvious, that it is the duty of chriſtians, to attend to their own ſecurity; and if it be poſſible, and conſiſtent with a good conſcience, to avoid thoſe moſt trying temptations which may probably prove too ſtrong for them; nor ever to ruſh into ſuch arduous ſituations, as the providence of GOD

GOD has not deſigned for them, nor called them to.

But it ſometimes happens to theſe diligent and cautious animals, that notwithſtanding all their care, and circumſpection; ſudden rains or floods, will enter even their well ſecured granaries; and threaten an injury to the corn, which with ſo much labor they have laid up. Immediately they are all buſy. They loſe no time to repair the damage; but bring up every wetted grain from their ſtorehouſe, and ſpread them without to dry in the warmth of the ſun. Who is not ſtruck with their conduct in this reſpect? This is one of the greateſt leſſons of wiſdom which we can learn from them. How beautifully does it hold out to us the neceſſity of ſeizing the *firſt* opportunity, of rectifying any ſpiritual evil, or misfortune; and that by a ſpeedy application to the only proper means! Has the chriſtian been overtaken in a fault? Has the frailty of his

nature, or the ſtratagems of Satan ſuddenly overcome him? The moment he is ſenſible of his fall, he is here powerfully inſtructed not to ſink in deſpondency, but inſtantly to endeavor to recover from the evil. And it is well worth obſerving, that the little ſubject of our preſent conſideration, does not depend on any thing which is wholly her own, for recovery from her misfortune. The benign influence, and warmth of the ſun, is that bleſſing of the CREATOR on which ſhe fully relies; while ſhe induſtriouſly uſes her own endeavors to obtain the benefit. Even ſo, the fallen chriſtian, who earneſtly applies to his heavenly FATHER, through the great ſun of righteouſneſs, in full dependence upon him alone; ſhall ſweetly find his ſtrength reſtored, and the evil removed by the all powerful beams of his forgiving grace.

I ſhall mention an inſtance or two more, from whence we may learn, not only

only their prudence, and wiſdom; but ſome other virtues, which, I am ſorry to ſay, are too much wanted, not only among mankind in the world at large, but alſo in religious ſocieties; among them who are more intimately related to each other by the ties of the goſpel. I mean, kindneſs, good-nature, brotherly love, and humble modeſty.

Theſe animals never obſtruct each other in their courſe; ſo far from it, that with the utmoſt delight, have I frequently obſerved their ready aſſiſtance of the embarraſſed. If any thing is too heavy to be dragged by one, they will either ſeparate it, if they can, and each bear his part of the burden; or many will immediately flock from every part, with willing offers of help in the moment of difficulty. As they are ſtrangers to idleneſs, ſo there is alſo no grudging among them; no contention about their ſeveral parts of the general ſervice; but every one, having the

ſame end in view; ſtrives to the utmoſt in his power, and generouſly aſſiſts his brother.

The followers of JESUS may take ſhame to themſelves from the compariſon, for inſtead of *provoking one another only to love, and to good works;* inſtead of kindly helping each other forward, and going on hand in hand in the way of the LORD, how have they forgotten the temper of the maſter they profeſs to ſerve! What bitter animoſities, what ſhameful diviſions, have been among them! What dreadful difficulties have they ſtudiouſly thrown in each others way! How are they too frequently puffed up in pride, not thinking of themſelves *ſoberly as they ought to think;* but being *ſwelled with the vanity of their imaginations, become high minded,* and look down upon their brethren with contempt! But pride ſhall have its fall. Even the ant ſhall put them to the bluſh, and teach them modeſty; for among

among this happy people, it is obſervable, that the young ones always follow the elder, and ſeem to receive their inſtructions, and portion of labor from them.

The ant can give *honor to whom honor is due,* though haughty man can refuſe it. The ant can diſcover a tractable, and teachable ſpirit; yet man is fooliſhly wiſe in his own conceit, and thereby ſhuts up the avenues to true wiſdom.

Another remarkable object of attention remains to be mentioned. The ant has no monitor, to put her in remembrance, and continually ſtimulate her to her duty; yet her wary feet never miſtake their path, and ſhe is always found buſied on her great object in view; but man, notwithſtanding he has a thouſand friendly intimations from every quarter of the creation; is continually ſtarting aſide, and running

ning from one vanity to another; or loitering, and ſleeping away the precious ſeaſon of action. What ſhall we ſay to this; Even charity muſt draw the humiliating inference, that though *vain man would be* thought *wiſe, he is*, too often, *more brutiſh than a wild aſs's colt.*

" *Go to the ant, thou ſluggard*;" ſays the inſpired writer, " *conſider her ways, and be wiſe.*" We have now made the conſiderate inveſtigation, and I truſt, have ſeen, in the ſtrongeſt light, the important leſſons which her ways lay plainly before us; but the wiſdom to be thus obtained, can alone be acquired by making the application to *ourſelves.* Let each of us examine himſelf, wherein, in all, or any of theſe reſpects, he is found wanting; and let him, by GOD's enabling grace, ſtrive to retain the ſublime wiſdom which is thus ſet before him. With this view, permit me, briefly to recapitulate what has been obſerved,

ſerved, and to collect the ſeveral rays thereof, as into one center, that they may more forcibly, and permanently ſtrike your minds.

O conſider, how unſatisfying in their nature, and how fleeting in their duration, are thoſe purſuits in which the miſtaken ſons of men uſually look for happineſs. The *faſhion of this world paſſeth away;* turn, therefore, your attention to that which is your only ſubſtantial good, and which ſhall endure with you for ever. *Make not proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof;* but, by the aid of GOD's ſpirit, ſecure that ſubſtantial comfort, which alone can ſupport you, when the preſent ſeaſon of action, and induſtry is paſſed. And having fixed your aim, O relax not in your purſuit, for any ſecondary conſideration whatever; but preſs forward with unremitting diligence, and ardor. Uſe the preſent opportunity. If it be youth, it has its peculiar advantages.

If

If you have already advanced beyond this happy ſeaſon, yet ſtill remember, that the longer you delay, the greater will be your difficulties. Watch, and pray that no pleaſurable ſeductions of any kind may draw you aſide from your great object. Fear no diſcouragements; for though you are weak in yourſelves, the grace of GOD is ſufficient for you. Ever be mindful of chriſtian prudence; that you may prevent, or avoid evil. Suppreſs every riſing ſin in the bud; for *ſin when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death.* Remember that you beſeech GOD not to lead you into temptation, but to *deliver you from* evil. Puſh not yourſelves, therefore, into unneceſſary trials, from a vain idea of your own ſtrength; leſt you ſhould be dreadfully convinced, that it is weakneſs in the extreme. Your ſufficiency is of GOD alone. Should you unhappily fall into the ſnare of the Tempter, yet O make not ſhipwreck of your faith, neither give place

to

to the devil; but turn, with humble, penitent, and contrite hearts, to a bleeding REDEEMER who is our *Advocate with the FATHER, and the propitiation for all our ſins.*

" Though ſin and ſorrow wound the ſoul,
" His balmy blood ſhall make us whole."

Truſt in his atoning ſacrifice; implore the grace of GOD's ſpirit to help; then *" go, and ſin no more."*

O think what is the difficulty of the chriſtian race; conſider your own frailty, make candid allowance for others; and O throw not hindrances in each others way; but *be kindly affectioned one to another.* Endeavor to build each other up, to *ſtrengthen the hands that hang down, and to confirm the feeble knees;* that you may ſo run together, as to obtain the fulfilment of thoſe precious promiſes, of which in CHRIST JESUS you are alike the happy partakers. Remember that

GOD *reſiſteth the proud*, humble yourſelves therefore, and ye ſhall be exalted.

If you are thus *willing and obedient*; Divine grace will aſſiſt you, till you are more than conquerors over every enemy, till you riſe into all the likeneſs of GOD, even the pure, holy, and loving *mind which was in Chriſt.*

When the gloomy winter of the tomb appears, your heart ſhall ſtand faſt, and undiſmayed; knowing that you have laid up *a good foundation againſt the time to come.* At length the day ſhall break, and the ſhadows flee away; the winter ſhall be paſſed, and one eternal ſummer ſhall ſucceed; not for labor, but for full enjoyment. Ye ſhall drink of the pleaſures which are at GOD's right hand, and *GOD ſhall be all in all.*

SERMON

SERMON III.

The Paternal Character of the DEITY conſidered.

Matthew Chapter vi. Verſe 9.

Our FATHER.

A Sweet, and truly delightful ſubject indeed, is this, for our meditation, when we conſider that it was no leſs a perſonage, than our REDEEMER, who hath authorized and inſtructed us, to addreſs the GREAT GOD of heaven and earth, and univerſal nature; by the endearing appellation of *our FATHER.* What an inexpreſſible honor is this conferred upon our nature, that we

ſhould be called the ſons of GOD! that He

" *Who Light Himſelf, in uncreated Light,*
" *Inveſted deep, dwells awfully retir'd*
" *From mortal eye, or angels purer ken;*
" *Th' eternal cauſe, ſupport, and end of all.*"

Should permit us to approach his throne of grace, with filial boldneſs. Let us then rejoice in the unutterable privilege, and laying aſide the meaner conſiderations of earth, let us now, in the full bent, and purpoſe of our minds, ſurvey our divine original, and examine theſe invaluable words, which are big with important meaning. With that view, I propoſe to lay before you, the moſt obvious ſenſes, in which our good GOD may be ſtrictly and properly conſidered as *our FATHER*; and ſhall endeavor, as I proceed, to impreſs upon your underſtandings, and hearts, ſuch inferences as I hope will be ſuitable to

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the glorious ſubject, and profitable to ourſelves.

1. We all know that what immediately conſtitutes the idea of *Father* is, the having produced, or brought creatures into exiſtence. This is the primary ſenſe of the word, and in this ſenſe is the Eternal GOD our Father; for *He hath made us, and not we ourſelves.* In this ſenſe, indeed, he may be properly ſtiled the Father of all the innumerable tribes of living creatures, which are all the works of his hands; from the higheſt ſpiritual intelligence, down to the meaneſt reptile of this earth. He hath created them all, and hath formed the bodies of all inferior earthly beings, like ours, out of the duſt. He hath alſo endowed them with an internal principle, (be it what it may) which is capable of perception, volition, recollection, and ſomething either of the ſame nature; or analogous to a faint glimmering

mering of reaſon. So far we ſee the divine ſtamp impreſſed even on the beaſts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the ſtill inferior creatures. But with reſpect to ourſelves, we know that we are of a nobler frame; for the ſacred page of revelation informs us, that GOD created man *in his own likeneſs.*

This is not to be underſtood with reſpect to our bodily frame; though that is *fearfully and wonderfully made*; for body, or matter, which is ſubſtantial, finite, and corruptible, can have no reſemblance of an immaterial, infinite, eternal ſpirit. It is not this curious vehicle of clay that is created in the likeneſs of GOD; but the ſoul, the immaterial and immortal principle which animates, and informs it; and indeed, if we attend to ourſelves, we may find, notwithſtanding our deep depravity, abundant traces of our divine origin, of our original ſimilitude to the *FATHER of the ſpirits of all fleſh.*

Bleſſed

Bleſſed be GOD, the divine likeneſs is not totally deſtroyed, though deplorably obliterated and defaced! Thanks to his goodneſs, that ſunk in ſin and corruption as we are, we can ſtill perceive "*the beam ethereal*" within us, and know that it is—

"*Though fully'd, and diſhonor'd, ſtill*
"*divine.*"

It appears that GOD is our FATHER, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the words, by creation. To apply the thought, permit me to aſk, For what did he create us? Was it only *to eat and to drink, and to riſe up to play*; merely to take our paſtime on the earth whereon he hath placed us? —— Had this been our only buſineſs, he needed not to have given us reaſonable, much leſs immortal ſouls. The ſpirit, and capacity of a brute, was ſufficient for this purpoſe. Our ſuperior reaſon is ſurely a ſuf-

a ſufficient proof, even to an intelligent pagan; that man muſt have been deſigned for ſuperior views. But we chriſtians are favored with much more abundant certainty. The revealed word of our GOD has removed every ſhadow of a doubt from us, and has clearly diſplayed to our underſtandings, the nature of our being, our buſineſs in this world, and our important views through a long, even an endleſs futurity. We are there informed, that our firſt parents were created pure and upright, in the likeneſs of GOD! but with a freedom of will which might render them capable of falling. Happy creatures! How delightful their employment, like the undegenerate hoſts above; to contemplate with increaſing delight, ſatisfaction, and wonder, his marvellous works! How rich the joy, continually to ſhew forth his praiſe, and their own felicity; by acts and expreſſions of adoration, and gratitude

titude! But alas, the happy ſcene was but of ſhort duration! They fell, and *by one man, ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin; and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned.* All received the contagion, and became ſo biaſſed towards evil, as to find their delight therein. This, as a natural conſequence, attends all who have proceeded from the firſt tranſgreſſor; for, as by his tranſgreſſion, his mental powers were impaired, and weakened; ſo he tranſmitted an impaired conſtitution of mind to his poſterity; becauſe *an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit:* Therefore, though it is a manifeſt abſurdity to ſuppoſe, that his poſterity were partakers with him, in the *guilt* of *his* tranſgreſſion; yet general experience proves it to be a ſober certainty, that every child of mortality does incur much perſonal guilt, as a conſequence of his deriving a debilitated mind from the firſt tranſgreſſor. "*What man is there who liveth and ſinneth not? There is not a juſt man*

upon the earth, who doeth good, and ſinneth not." Holy Scripture informs us alſo, that our intellectual part is immortal, and conſequently muſt have exiſtence ſomewhere, to all eternity. That exiſtence muſt be either miſerable or happy. GOD is the only fountain of all happineſs. His nature is happineſs, (if we may ſo ſpeak) and conſequently, we can be happy, only in proportion as we are like to Him. If by the entrance of ſin into the world, we have loſt, or defaced the original likeneſs of GOD, in which the firſt man was created, we are ſo far rendered miſerable. Take theſe conſiderations together, and they clearly point out our buſineſs upon earth; namely, to recover, if poſſible, that divine likeneſs, in which our happineſs muſt conſiſt. But can we do this? Certainly we can. For though *by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men, to condemnation*, (that is, though through the firſt man's tranſgreſſion, all his poſterity have ſuffered the loſs of

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that ſtrength, which they otherwiſe would have poſſeſſed;) yet *by the righteouſneſs of one, the free gift of grace came upon all men, to juſtification of life*;) (that is, the free gift of divine favor to forgive paſt ſins upon ſincere repentance, and to paſs by involuntary defects; and of divine aid, to help our infirmities;) For as *by one man's diſobedience, many were made ſinners*, (in conſequence of their derived weakneſs) ſo *by the obedience of one ſhall many be made*, (or enabled to become) *righteous*; namely, all who chuſe to accept the grace (or favor) of GOD, in that way in which he has thought proper to propoſe it. The means are held out unto us, and we are further directed how to uſe, and apply them; to obtain that renewing in the ſpirit of our minds, which is ſo abſolutely neceſſary to our happineſs; even a full reſtoration to the likeneſs of our heavenly FATHER, by which alone, we can be rendered again fit to partake of the pleaſures which are at his right

hand, and become capable of enjoying them. Thus we ſee what is our true nature, our buſineſs here, and our proſpects hereafter. O then let us bleſs the LORD our CREATOR for the exiſtence which he has beſtowed upon us, which, if we are not our own deſtroyers, ſhall be eternally crowned with *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.* And in order to our enjoying this perfect felicity, which his goodneſs deſigned for us; let us ſtrive to uſe, and improve to the utmoſt, the period of probation which is allotted to us here. This can only be, by deſpiſing, and avoiding the lying vanities of life; by ſetting our faces as flint againſt all its corrupt cuſtoms; by *denying all ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul;* and by *redeeming the time,* the unſpeakably valuable time, not from evil only, but from trifling, and inſignificant purſuits; that ſo we may croud into every remaining portion of it, all the good we can; and through the aid of the divine ſpirit,

rit, acquire every holy habit and temper. By a continual fervent deſire, and ſteady uniform endeavor, thus to glorify GOD in all things; may we again *acquaint ourſelves with him, and be at peace.*

2. It is the buſineſs, as well as inclination of a parent; to provide for, and ſatisfy the wants of his helpleſs offſpring. This is the next ſenſe wherein we may properly conſider the great GOD as *our FATHER.* What a copious proviſion has He made for all our real wants! How abundantly does He ſupply our every neceſſity out of the riches of his grace! Nay and even ſurround us with objects of innocent delight! He has not denied us pleaſures, but has furniſhed us with abundance of ſuch as are really ſuited to our nature. How beautiful is the earth whereon he hath placed us! How admirably adapted to our accommodation, ſupport, and entertainment! His ſun bleſſes our days,

warms,

warms, enlivens, and invigorates our hearts; ſpreads diffuſive gaiety, and chearfulneſs all around us; and by his active energy opens the ſtores of the MOST GRACIOUS LORD, and makes univerſal nature teem with benefits. His moon ſweetly illumines, with milder radiance, our more ſerious hours of contemplation; gives law to the ebbing, and flowing ocean; and is alſo, as well as the greater light; a rule for the meaſurement of times, and of ſeaſons; of days, and of years. His is the vaulted canopy above, equally fitted to command our wonder, and fill our hearts with ſublime delight; whether it is beheld by the enraptured eye, clad in the brightneſs of meridian azure; or in its equally majeſtic, but more ſolemn evening robe—

"*Studded with golden fires.*"

By His command, and direction, the maſſy globe rolls round, producing the neceſſary

neceſſary ſucceſſion of ſeaſons, and the pleaſing change of day, and night. He ſpreads the velvet green beneath our feet, and ſcatters, with a liberal hand, in every part of our way, the innumerable tribes of vegetable beauty. He tempers the air we breathe, to ſuit the health of our frame; nay even—

" *In the thick clouds tremendous gloom,*
" *The lightning's lurid glare;*
" *Beams forth the ſame all gracious pow'r*
" *That breathes the vernal air.*"

His ſtorms and tempeſts are replete with advantages to us; and are neceſſary to preſerve the healthful conſtitution of that fine, all pervading, and all ſupporting element. His goodneſs beſtows us the appointed weeks of harveſt, and cauſes the earth to produce its various fruits in due ſeaſon. He raiſes, and ſuſtains, for our uſe, the plentiful variety of animals, whoſe fleſh ſupplies our tables with dainties, and whoſe fleeces warm our bodies. He gives us the

lofty

lofty trees of the foreſt, the ſolid marble, and even the humble clay, as uſeful materials, for habitations to dwell in, ſecure, and ſheltered from the neceſſary inclemency of the ſeaſons. By His appointment, even the bowels of the earth ſupply us abundantly with the heart-chearing mineral, to enliven the gloomy hours when *he ſendeth forth his ice like morſels*, and—

> " *Shakes the Nations with his northern blaſt.*"

He hath furniſhed us liberally with all the various comforts that belong to a ſtate of refined ſociety. To enumerate all his earthly bleſſings would require a volume. In ſhort, He has given us all things neceſſary, not for our life only, but for our comfort, and delight, during our reſidence here; and theſe, if we receive them with thankfulneſs, and uſe them with moderation; we may richly enjoy. But this is not all. He alſo condeſcends to inform us, that beſides theſe earthly benefits; he has made

made ample proviſion for our future felicity, in another better, and unchangeable ſtate; for *we know, that if our earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building of GOD, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;* where all evil ſhall be done away, and nothing ſhall remain but *fullneſs of joy.* Nay the bleſſedneſs of that ſtate, and place, is ſuch as *eye hath not ſeen, ear hath not heard;* and of which it hath not *entered into the heart of* mortal *man to conceive.* Our FATHER, and CREATOR, hath made us for happineſs, and this completion of it, emphatically ſtiled in ſcripture, *Eternal Life,* is by him graciouſly offered, that all who will, may receive it. Has not our GOD abundantly provided for us both here, and hereafter? Is he not, therefore, in this ſenſe alſo, our beneficent FATHER? How then ſhould we receive his multiplied kindneſſes? In cold, and negligent unconcern? Ought we not rather to adopt the rapturous hymn of the grateful

pſalmiſt, *Bleſs the LORD, O my ſoul; and all that is within me, bleſs his holy name. Bleſs the LORD, O my ſoul, and forget not any one of his benefits!* O let his praiſe be continually in our mouths, let us ſing unto the LORD, becauſe he hath *dealt bountifully with us.*"

And ſince it is He, who *openeth his hand, and ſatisfieth the deſires of every living thing;* it is ſurely alſo incumbent upon us, to acknowledge our dependence upon Him; and in every concern, *by prayer, and ſupplication, to make our requeſts known unto Him,* in whom *alone* is *our help*; and who *giveth* ſo *liberally, and upbraideth not.* Certainly this is a neceſſary, and becoming, as well as delightful exerciſe: Nay it is an abſolute, and urgent duty. And as *the LORD is loving unto every man,* and witholdeth no good thing *from them who walk uprightly,* and ſeek him in ſincerity; we ſhould thus approach him in faith, not wavering; but fully confiding in his

unſpeakable

unſpeakable goodneſs. As his children we are by theſe reaſons bound to conſider him as *our FATHER*, and to draw near with filial reverence, but alſo with filial boldneſs unto the throne of his grace. Nor can it ever be proper, that we ſhould preſume poſitively to dictate to the GOD of infinite wiſdom, what particular events we think would be bleſſings to us. *He knows our real neceſſities before we aſk. He waits to be gracious*, and is ever ready to relieve them; but *he will be enquired of.* We ſhould therefore always remember our ignorance with reſpect to our real advantage; and be careful that a humble, holy ſubmiſſion to his will, may accompany all our prayers. Our petitions alſo ſhould be preſented to him *only* in that way, which he has declared to be alone acceptable to him, from all thoſe who have heard the glad tidings of the Goſpel, that is, in the name, and through the mediation, of JESUS CHRIST.

But further, from this view of our CREATOR's goodneſs, we ſhould learn alſo, not to be too anxiouſly thoughtful *for our life, what we ſhall eat, or what we ſhall drink*; nor *for our body, what we ſhall put on*; as conſidering, that our heavenly Father hath made us much better than the fowls of the air, whom yet he feedeth; or the lilies (or flowers) of the field, which he hath cloathed in more than regal elegance, and beauty. O let us remember that He knoweth we have need of all theſe things, and implicitly committing ourſelves unto Him, *ſeek firſt his kingdom, and its righteouſneſs*. This is, comparatively ſpeaking, the only object worth our anxious attention; and therefore, in the courſe of his providence, He hath ſo ordained, that it is the *only one* which we can with certainty obtain by a deep ſolicitude, and conſtant purſuit. But let us obſerve alſo, how ſweetly his paternal encouragement ſhines forth. He has promiſed that if we make this *one thing needful*

our

our *firſt* object, all other neceſſary things *ſhall be added unto us.*

The paternal character of GOD is indeed much too copious to be conſidered, even in the outline only, in a ſingle diſcourſe; without lengthening it greatly beyond the uſual bounds. I therefore leave the obſervations already made, upon your minds for meditation; and I truſt your *meditations on Him will be ſweet.* His character as a FATHER, is in every point of view, equally venerable, and amiable; *greatly to be feared,* or reverenced, yet *altogether lovely.* Be you, his children, duly influenced, by conſidering your relation to him, and his loving kindneſs to you. Keep his commandments, ſhew forth his praiſes. *Serve the LORD with gladneſs.* Thus I leave you for the preſent. May GOD preſerve you under his moſt holy keeping!

SERMON

SERMON IV.

The Paternal Character of the DEITY conſidered.

Matthew, Chapter vi. Verſe 9.

Our FATHER.

WE come now to reſume a delightful conſideration on the paternal character of GOD.

He has already been conſidered, as our CREATOR, and as the BOUNTIFUL BEING, who hath favored us with ſo liberal a ſupply, of all things neceſſary for life, and rational felicity. And we have attended to the ſober leſ-

ſons

ſons of inſtruction, reſulting from the due conſideration, of our relation to him; and his love to us, in ſo providing for our comfort.

To proſecute the pleaſing ſubject, it may be next obſerved; that when we ſurvey the preſerving, and protecting Providence of GOD, we may properly conſider Him, in a third ſenſe, as *our FATHER.* The creation of nature would have been almoſt nothing, unleſs the ſame all powerful hand preſerved it.

"*He pois'd, impells, and rules the ſteady*
"*whole.*"

And ſhould he for a moment withdraw his active energy, and preſerving care; all the wonders of univerſal nature would ruſh to immediate ruin; and we muſt be partakers of the general deſtruction. But to ſpeak in a more confined ſenſe. If his *particular* providence

dence did not encircle us on every ſide, we ſhould ſurely become the prey of innumerable unſeen evils, which we know croud around us; and the leaſt of which might prove fatal. How eaſily might one of the finer movements of theſe curious machines be diſlocated, or broken; and the functions of the whole inſtantaneouſly ſtopped! What innumerable accidents are every day, by his permiſſion, peopling the abodes of death! The falling of a tile, a ſtroke from a pebble, or even a blaſt of chill air; may be the meſſenger of diſſolution. The ſlighteſt circumſtances, which are totally unforeſeen, and therefore, impoſſible to be prevented, are frequently ſuffered, as ſecond cauſes, to produce the moſt fatal conſequences; thus—

" *When obedient nature knows his will,*
" *A Fly, a Grapeſtone, or a Hair can*
" *kill.*"

It is the watchful providence of GOD alone, which has hitherto preſerved us from theſe Calamities, which has lengthened out our ſeaſon of repentance, and trial; and prevented our being ſuddenly ſnatched into the preſence of our judge: ſurely then we ſhould be deeply ſenſible of his abundant mercy. If his paternal tenderneſs continues our opportunity, we ſhould certainly anſwer the end of his gracious deſign, and *ſo number our days, as to apply our hearts unto wiſdom.* We ſhould ever cultivate the trueſt gratitude towards our omnipotent PRESERVER, and look up to Him, as the *GOD of our lives, and the length of our days; in whom we live, and move, and have our being.*

And when we further conſider, that we have a ſubtle, watchful, and diligent *enemy;* who *goeth about as a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour;* O how ſhould filial gratitude to our inexpreſſibly careful, and almighty parent, fill

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our boſoms! For if the power of this evil one was not limited, no doubt he would greedily gratify his miſchievous nature; and feel a horrid joy, in uſing any ſecond, and ſeemingly natural cauſe, to hurry us out of this world into his own place. He would fatally take advantage of us, while we were negligently ſporting with trifles, and inattentive to our only true intereſt. But, exalted be Divine Love! *The hairs of our head are all numbered.* We are eſteemed by our heavenly FATHER, of *more value than many ſparrows*, and we are graciouſly aſſured that *not a ſparrow falleth to the ground without his will.* Matt. x. ver. 29, 30, 31. O then let us truſt always in the LORD, who is our fortreſs, and defence; and our ſtrong ſalvation. Let us *never fear where no fear is.* When we awake in the morning, let us ariſe *with gladneſs in our hearts;* and at night, let us *lay us down in peace, and ſleep ſecure;* as knowing that *it is He who maketh us to dwell in ſafety.*

4. He alſo corrects us, in mercy, for our faults; and very numerous are the paſſages of Holy writ, wherein ſpeaking on this very ſubject, the GREAT GOD is pleaſed to ſtile himſelf *our FATHER;* and graciouſly condeſcends to call us *his children.* Certainly this is one of the moſt diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics of parental love; and our heavenly FATHER continually exerts his particular providence, for this greatly advantageous purpoſe; and often ſhews his loving kindneſs to his erring children, in denying the fooliſh wiſh of our hearts. So exceedingly thoughtleſs an animal is man, that while buſily engaged in a round of earthly purſuits; he ſtops not to attend to the motions of his own ſpirit, and conſider how oft, or rather how continually, he offendeth. To awaken him to this neceſſary reflection, the troubles and diſquietudes of life are often appointed. This we may ſee clearly, if we conſider how admirably the cure is adapted to the diſorder.

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Does any one center his proſpects, hopes, and deſires, in this lower world? behold, a troop of diſappointments, ariſe in long ſucceſſion, to fruſtrate his moſt ſanguine purſuits. Theſe are often ſuch as no human prudence could foreſee, and conſequently the moſt circumſpect attention could not poſſibly prevent. Has any one rivetted his affections too ſtrongly to any earthly, or created object; and ſuffered it to rival his CREATOR in his heart, by engaging his whole attention, by alluring him to a neglect of GOD, or the breach of his commandments? How often, I believe I might ſay, how conſtantly, does that very object prove the cauſe of extreme affliction! Love is ſurely a paſſion allied to heaven, but to be rational, to be innocent, to enjoy the ſmile, and approbation of GOD; it muſt be *duly proportioned* to its object. Like all other good things, it becomes bad in exceſs; and it is certainly then in exceſs, a criminal exceſs; when we *love the creature,*

more

more than the CREATOR. Then his over-ruling providence directs us to meet the *unſatisfactory* return. The man of friendly heart, who can nevertheleſs ſlight the offered friendſhip of the MOST HIGH, may purſue his earthly attachments; but in bitter experience ſhall he find, that generally—

" *Friendſhip is but an empty name,*
A charm that lulls to ſleep;
A ſhade that follows wealth, or fame;
But leaves the wretch to weep."

So alſo ſhall every endearing tie, every relative attachment; if it miniſters to our ungodlineſs, miniſter alſo to our ſorrow. Ye who know the heart breaking diſtreſſes, which ſpring from the ingratitude of thoſe who were deareſt to you; aſk your hearts this ſerious queſtion. Have you not ſuffered your earthly attachments to confine your affections, and deſires, to the periſhing concerns of this lower ſcene; to ren-

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der you too inattentive to the GOD who made you; too negligent of the glorious felicity which he has deſigned for you; and too eager in the purſuit of earthly joy? When you *took ſweet counſel together*, have you not forgotten that here you have *no continuing city*, and been willing to ſit down contented, and find your *All* below? Ah, do not your hearts too ſurely anſwer, yes? Here then again paternal chaſtiſement ſteps in, and indulgently ſevere, gives the painful diſappointment; or tears from our bleeding boſoms the infatuating deſtruction. He who *watches over us for good*, in painful tenderneſs, ſnatches theſe deluſive pleaſures from our embrace; forcibly, but kindly, removes us from *temptation, and a ſnare*; and by a ſalutary violence, turns our minds to reflection, and brings us back to duty, and to himſelf.

Yet *the LORD does not willingly afflict any man*, till trouble becomes abſolutely neceſſary;

neceſſary; and it is then *only* that *thoſe whom he loves, he rebukes, and chaſtens.*

From this view of our GOD's paternal character; ſome important, and obvious inferences ariſe. 1ſt. It becomes us *in patience to poſſeſs our ſouls*, and even under his ſevereſt diſpenſations, to profeſs, like old Eli; *It is the LORD, let him do what ſeemeth to him good.* 2dly. We ſhould receive theſe his viſitations, as *tokens for good;* being clear indications of his paternal compaſſion, who is thus by every method bringing us to himſelf. 3dly. We ſhould ſtudy, and endeavor, that the chaſtiſement may have its proper effect; and ſtrive for the future to avoid ſuch errors of our hearts, as we may perceive, have rendered theſe painful circumſtances neceſſary; particularly, for this end, ſhould we watch over our *evil hearts*, which are ſo prone to *depart from the living GOD, our FATHER.* And we ſhould pray earneſtly unto Him, to help us to obtain

tain theſe ſuitable diſpoſitions of mind, and to ſanctify our afflictions; that ſo, by teaching us to withdraw our affections, in a due degree, from earthly objects; and to *ſet them on things above;* they may *work out for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

5. I come now to the laſt inſtance which I ſhall mention, wherein with peculiar propriety, we may behold the paternal tenderneſs of our celeſtial parent. A Father not only guards his offspring from preſent danger, and ſupplies their preſent neceſſities; but it is alſo his ſolicitude, and buſineſs to provide for their future welfare, and felicity. And ſurely the LORD hath herein moſt glorioufly exhibited his unſearchable love to us, in not ſparing even his own ſon, *that we might live through him.* The earthly parent forgives the trembling, guilty child; but O how does the forgiveneſs of our heavenly FATHER riſe above all compa-

 riſon!

riſon! How great is the wonderful proviſion which he hath made for our reconciliation to himſelf; and for our reſtoration to felicity, and future happineſs; by appointing the propitiatory ſacrifice, and mediation of the great REDEEMER!

We know that *we have all ſinned, and come* deplorably *ſhort of the Glory of GOD.* By our atrocious conduct, we have rendered ourſelves the objects of his wrath; yet has He not been rigorous to puniſh, but inſtead of wrath He hath *remembered mercy.* When our iniquities had ſeparated between us, and our FATHER; and he might juſtly have baniſhed us from his favor, and preſence; and conſigned us to *the blackneſs of darkneſs* for ever; yet even then, was a remedy provided for us; a remedy as ſurprizing in its nature, as it is unſpeakably beneficial.

"*Survey*

——" *Survey the wond'rous cure,*
" *And at each ſtep, let higher wonder riſe ;*"

" *Pardon for fouleſt ſin, and pardon too.*"

" *By means that ſpeak its value beyond*
" *thought ;*"

" *A pardon bought with blood, with blood*
" *divine ;*"

" *With blood divine of Him we made our*
" *foe ;*"

" *Perſiſted to provoke, though woo'd, and*
" *aw'd ;*"

" *Bleſs'd, and chaſtis'd ; yet flagrant re-*
" *bels ſtill :*
" *And rebels 'midſt the thunders of his*
" *throne :*"

" *Nor we alone, a rebel univerſe :*"

" *Our ſpecies up in arms, not one exempt:*"

" *Yet for the fouleſt of the foul, He dies.*"

O think how wonderfully *GOD commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet ſinners,* CHRIST *died for us.* O turn your imagination to Calvary's aſtoniſhed top, and while ye behold Him, in whom *dwelt all the fullneſs of the GODHEAD bodily;* Coloſ. Ch. ii. v. 9. who was *the brightneſs of his FATHER's glory*; Heb. Ch. i. v. 3. graſping in agony the bloody nail; hanging on the accurſed tree, and ſuffering *the juſt, for the unjuſt, that He might bring us to GOD*; 1 Pet. Ch. iii. v. 18. Conſider how immenſe the price which was paid for our default, how great our defection; how abominable our ſin to the GOD of unſpotted purity; and yet how inconceivably vaſt the love which could ſo riſe above our evil deſerts; could plan, and execute, for ſuch offenders; ſo wonderful a ſcheme of mercy, as that which

was

was exhibited to the world in our redemption by CHRIST JESUS. Conſider theſe things, and permit me to aſk, could any inſtance of paternal affection be poſſibly ſhewn by our GOD, ſuperior, or even equal to this? The price of our ranſom is paid. Our great High Prieſt hath made *an atonement* for *us;* and now *being juſtified by the blood of* CHRIST, *we ſhall be ſaved from wrath through Him,* unleſs we are ſo deſperately beſotted, as to ſpurn at theſe wonders of his love; and refuſe, or neglect, his great ſalvation. But if we willingly accept of peace, and forgiveneſs; on the conditions which the FATHER OF MERCIES moſt condeſcendingly offers to us; He will undertake the renovation of our debilitated, and depraved ſouls, by his ſpirit; will deſtroy in us *the carnal mind, which is enmity againſt Him*; and render us ſpiritually minded. He will *perfect ſtrength out of our weakneſs*, and enable us to *mortify the* corrupt *deeds of the body*, and evil affections of the mind. He will

give

give us the victory; and bring all within us, our tempers, paſſions, inclinations, and deſires, into happy ſubjection to the peaceable, and pure laws of the REDEEMER. The fountain being made pure, the ſtream ſhall be pure alſo. Our actions, and our words, will be conformable to our holy profeſſion. The glory of GOD ſhall be our only aim, and we ſhall have *life and peace. Eternal life* through JESUS CHRIST, and the *peace* of GOD which ſurpaſſeth all preſent underſtanding. Then ſhall we, poor prodigals, who were deſervedly outcaſts from the favor of our heavenly FATHER, in ſome degree; become his children again, in the ſweeteſt, and moſt endearing ſenſe; by reconciliation, and grace; through our LORD JESUS CHRIST; For *as many as are led by the ſpirit of GOD, they are the ſons of GOD.* O may we be among the happy number who thankfully conſidering *the length, and breadth, and depth, and heighth, of the love of GOD in* CHRIST JESUS, are *not*

diſobedient

diſobedient unto his heavenly calling. O let us return unto Him in ſincerity, and genuine contrition; with full purpoſe of ſoul. Let us with filial, but humble, reverential boldneſs addreſs Him as *our FATHER.* Let us with agonizing hearts lament that we have *ſinned before Him, and are no more worthy to be called his children.* Let us adhere cloſely to our fervent reſolutions of amendment, and ſupplicate his holy ſpirit, to *help our infirmities;* to *lead us into all* neceſſary *truth,* all moral rectitude; and to keep us in the happy path of peace and purity.

Then ſhall we love Him above all who hath *firſt ſo* wonderfully *loved us,* then ſhall we ſerve him ſtrictly, becauſe we love Him; then ſhall we love all mankind as brethren, with *pure* hearts and *fervently;* as being all dear to Him, and *heirs of the ſame grace.* Then ſhall we *lay up our treaſure in heaven,* where our heavenly FATHER is, and *ſet our affec-*

tions

tions on things above; and laſtly, we ſhall then be brought to look with ſatisfaction, on that approaching day, which ſhall enlarge our powers; ſhall place us beyond the reach of every evil, and re-unite us to our heavenly Parent, to drink of *the pleaſures which are at his right hand for evermore.* O glorious change! O happy day! O rich felicity for the ſons of GOD! Heavenly FATHER, make it ours through JESUS CHRIST our LORD!

SERMON

SERMON V.

Chriſtian Converſion and Simplicity.

Matthew, Chapter xviii. Verſe 3.

Verily, I ſay unto ye; Except ye be converted, and become as little children; ye ſhall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

THE Evangeliſts having each given us his own account, of the life, and tranſactions of their maſter; through various cauſes, which might be aſſigned, it has ſo happened, that there are found ſome little difficulties; and even ſeeming contradictions; in their ſeveral accounts; but a ſmall degree of at-

tention, and ſkill, is ſufficient to reconcile them fully.

Thus St. Matthew here tells us, that JESUS being come to Capernaum, had entered into the houſe, whither he went, when his diſciples came to him; and from his account, it would ſeem as if they had *then* propoſed this queſtion to JESUS, *Who is the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven?* Whereas by the accounts of St. Mark, and St. Luke, we learn, that they had *diſputed among themſelves* concerning it, and that *by the way* to Capernaum. Let us conſider, and unite the ſeveral accounts; and the matter appears to ſtand thus: CHRIST, and his diſciples, came to Capernaum; and the diſciples, as they went along, diſputed among themſelves, who ſhould be greateſt in the future kingdom of the MESSIAH. They at length came to the houſe. JESUS then ſent Peter to catch the fiſh, and find the tribute money; which being paid to the collector, Peter returned;

returned; and then, when they were all together; JESUS, who knew their hearts, enquired of them, what was the matter concerning which they had diſputed among themſelves by the way. They, conſcious of a fault for which he had frequently reproved them, held their peace. JESUS then ſat down, and called them all around him, before he delivered this awful information. Here St. Matthew begins his account. *At that time* (when thus called by CHRIST,) *came the diſciples of* JESUS *unto him, ſaying*, in reply to his queſtion; The matter which we diſputed about was; *Who*, which of us; *is* to be the *greateſt in the kingdom of heaven*. And JESUS calling to him a little child, an infant, who ſtood by; and probably belonged to the family where they then were; ſet him in the midſt of them, to be thus obſerved with attention by every one of them; and ſaid unto them; *Verily, I ſay unto ye, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye ſhall not* (or as it may be more

ſtrongly rendered, like the latin tranſlation *ye ſhall in no wiſe) enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoſoever, therefore, ſhall humble himſelf as this little child; he is greateſt in the kingdom of heaven.* Thus by comparing, and uniting the ſeveral Evangeliſts; the ſeeming difficulty, which ſome of the petty cavillers at the goſpel have ſometimes urged, entirely vaniſhes; and all appears eaſy, and natural.

I muſt juſt obſerve, that it is ſurprizing indeed, that the diſciples could ſo continually miſtake the nature of their maſter's kingdom, after his remarkable diſcourſes concerning it. His expreſſions are always the moſt cautious; and ſuch as, one ſhould think, would give them a true idea of it. He uſually calls it the *kingdom of heaven,* ſometimes his FATHER's kingdom, and I believe it is but once recorded that he ſtiled it his own kingdom; which is where he ſays plainly *My kingdom is not of this world*; yet they were ſo blinded by their preconceived

conceived prejudices; that they would not underſtand him in the plain, and literal meaning of his words; but in a figurative, and falſe ſenſe.

The occaſion, and connection of the text having been attended to; let us proceed to conſider the true import, viz. the primary meaning of the words; and alſo, what leſſons of inſtruction are therein intended for, and conveyed to us.

The Jews, in general, expected their MESSIAH to be a great *temporal prince*; and probably thought that his kingdom ſhould ſuperſede all other temporal authorities upon earth, and have rule over all nations. The diſciples had therefore early imbibed the ſame notion. They believed JESUS to be the promiſed MESSIAH, and thought that their maſter was ordained, notwithſtanding his humble appearance, by the miraculous power of heaven, ſuddenly to riſe

to

to ſovereign rule. They were uneaſy under the Roman yoke, accordingly we read, that they came unto him at one time, ſaying, *LORD wilt thou* now, *at this time, reſtore the kingdom to Iſrael?* And in this fancied kingdom, they imagined, that they ſhould be advanced to higher poſts of honor, and diſtinction than other Jews. Here began a matter of contention: They were not ſatisfied with this ſuppoſed diſtinction, which they had formed for themſelves; but one of them muſt become greater than all the reſt; and undoubtedly rank next in place to the King MESSIAH. And moſt probably, every one, in the vanity of his heart, fancied himſelf to be fitteſt for this ſuperior dignity; and therefore, they were continually diſputing about it.

It is indeed ſurprizing, that a whole nation ſhould be ſo blinded by their ambition, as *generally* to adopt this miſtaken notion concerning the MESSIAH; notwithſtanding

withſtanding even the *ſecond prophecy* concerning him, very plainly inſinuated the contrary. *The ſceptre ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until* SHILOH *come.* What could more clearly intimate that the temporal glory ſhould be then departed from Iſrael? What was more fully to be inferred from thence, than that his kingdom was *not of this world?* Yet even the diſciples, having imbibed the common opinion of the Jews, in their youth, continued ſo poſſeſſed of it in their minds; that the *cautious* expreſſions of their maſter, (as has been juſt obſerved) and his repeated inſinuations to the contrary, when foretelling his own death, and reſurrection; and delivering his divine leſſons to them; did not lead them to infer otherwiſe; and to form a juſter notion of his kingdom. Nay, even *his Death* was not ſufficient for this. After his crucifixion, they gave up all for loſt; and mentioned it with an air of diſappointment, that they

truſted

truſted that it had been him who ſhould have redeemed Iſrael, until he appearing to two of them, on their journey to Emmaus; *opened their underſtandings; and explained to them, in all the ſcriptures, the things concerning himſelf.*

To ſatisfy this continual diſpute as far as was uſeful to them; and to check the vanity, pride, and ambition of their yet unenlightened hearts; JESUS placed the child before them, and ſaid, with all that divine emphaſis which the importance of the matter required. *Verily* (i. e. as a ſolemn truth) *I ſay unto you, Except ye be converted* from theſe ambitious, and covetous deſires; which are founded only in pride, and ſelf-conceit; and from this *contentious* temper, which is ſo oppoſite to that *love* required among brethren; *and* except ye *become* the contrary to all this, in your inmoſt ſouls; even in humility, ſimplicity, innocence, docility, and every other amiable diſpoſition; *like unto this little child,* who

who (not yet corrupted with the wickedneſs of this world,) is deſtitute of pride, has no thirſt for ſuperiority, or rule; no deſire of wealth, or ſplendor; no regard to the things of this world: unleſs ye become thus changed, *ye ſhall* be ſo far from riſing to a ſuperior dignity in the kingdom of heaven; that ye ſhall have no part, or lot therein; ye ſhall *in no wiſe* be even permitted to *enter*.

This I take to have been the occaſion, and *primary meaning* of the words of our text. But the inſtruction contained in them, was by no means, confined to the *few* to whom they were ſpoken. The ſame diſpoſitions of mind, which were wrong in the Apoſtles; are undoubtedly wrong, wherever they are found. The corruptions, and evil deſires, which would have been impediments to their entrance into the kingdom of heaven; muſt equally hinder the ſpiritual advantage, and future felicity; of every being in whoſe boſom they remain unſub-

dued, and not rooted out; conſequently, the ſame plain, clear, and important aſſertion; which the great friend of mankind, ſo ſolemnly declared to the *firſt* preachers of his goſpel; muſt be equally full of the moſt intereſting inſtruction to every one of his followers; in every age, and nation, to the end of time. Hear it, then, my Brethren, declared unto you alſo; *Except ye be converted, and become as little children; ye ſhall in no wiſe enter the kingdom of heaven.*

To point out the inſtruction contained in theſe important words, when they are applied to ourſelves; ſhall be the remainder of my endeavor on this occaſion.

Firſt then, I obſerve that the children here propoſed to us, are *little* children; not the more advanced youth, who have taſted, and even begun to *reliſh* the bitter draught of earthly corruption; but *infants*, juſt beginning to walk, and prattle;

prattle; juſt learning to uſe the faculties which GOD hath given them; whoſe little boſoms know no deſire to pervert, or abuſe, the bleſſings of *motion* and *ſpeech.*

JESUS having called a little child, ſet him in the midſt of them. Let us in imagination do the ſame, and learn from the little inſtructor, thoſe maxims of wiſdom, which will infallibly lead us back to *ſimplicity*, and *innocence;* that ſimplicity, and innocence, which ſince we became men, and *ſought out many* vain *inventions*, we have unhappily forſaken.

View then the little prattler, in all his engaging ſweetneſs. His artleſs heart has no deſire of ſuperiority, or rule. No ſtorms of pride diſturb his peaceful breaſt. He knows not what ambition means; has no conception of the guilty contrivances, and deſigns; which in riper years, the ſons of pride, and folly;

too generally adopt. Empires and dominions are nothing to him. He would tread on crowns as the graſs; and as ſoon ſpurn away a ſceptre, as a ſtraw. Ignorant of the abuſe, as well as uſe, of all corrupting gold; the miſer's heap would alſo be diſregarded by him. Vain wealth is an evil, of which he has not yet learned the meaning. He takes no anxious thought for the morrow. Satisfy his neceſſities this moment, and he cares not for the next. He is indeed ſenſible of the calls of hunger, and thirſt; the real wants of his nature; but he has no *artificial*, or *fanciful* wants. He pants not for the ſuperfluous redundancies of luxury. So he feels pain, and expreſſes his feeling of it, in that way which is according to his nature; but no ſooner is the evil removed, no ſooner are the calls of nature ſatisfied; than the ſunſhine of joy is again lighted up on his innocent countenance. The ſweet ſmile of artleſs ſimplicity ſpreads over his contented face: The little charmer turns his

his delightful eye, in full complacency, towards the hand which fed him, or removed his anguiſh; and in all the fondneſs of gratitude, and fulleſt dependence; clings to his beloved mother, and hides his head in her enraptured boſom.

Fearful as the hind, the ſmalleſt ſuppoſed danger, fills his tender boſom with diſmay: He runs to his parent for protection, and ſecure within thoſe foſtering arms, he forgets the danger, and fears no future harm.

To pleaſe his parents is his only aim, his conſtant endeavor: he fears even their diſſembled frown: He dwells on their ſmiles, and with eagerneſs, imbibes the rapture which ſparkles in their eyes. Subject to their wholeſome, and neceſſary controll, his gentle ſpirit is pliable as the yielding bough, and ſoft as the wax, to every ſalutary impreſſion. Thus lowly and tractable; mild, and teachable;

able; the ſweet innocent eagerly receives inſtruction from their lips; and ſubmiſſively, and implicitly accepts every communication of ſuitable knowledge.

Thoſe dire weeds of the human heart, pining envy, and implacable malice, have not yet ſown their ſeeds in this happy ſoil. Does the infant obſerve the ſmile of delight on the face of its companion; it joins in the ſmile, and participates the mutual pleaſure; nor muſt I neglect to mention, with what eager readineſs, it will ever hold out its little hand, for forgiveneſs, and reconciliation.

Many leſs inſtances of the ſweet ſimplicity, and artleſs innocence of infancy, might with propriety be mentioned. Mothers! contemplate your little darlings, while ye feed them; while ye adminiſter every tender, every delightful ſervice unto them; and the leſſons ye may

may learn from them, ſhall abundantly repay your care, and anxiety. Fathers! view in your infant offspring, what ye *once were*, and what ye *muſt again be*, if ye would enter the kingdom of heaven.

To unlearn the evil leſſons of life, is indeed a great undertaking. To tear up; and root out, thoſe deep ſpread corruptions, which the artleſs ſtate of infancy knows not; but which too generally gain an early poſſeſſion of the human breaſt, is a matter of the utmoſt importance; and requires the *greateſt* attention, diligence and labor; for *unleſs ye be* thus *converted, and* thus *become like little children, ye ſhall in no wiſe enter the kingdom of heaven.*

This is the poſitive and ſolemn declaration of our REDEEMER; of that REDEEMER, who hath done the utmoſt, which could poſſibly be done, for our advantage; who hath *opened the kingdom of heaven to all* true *believers;* and is gone before,

before, to prepare thoſe manſions of bliſs for us; if we are *willing and obedient*, and learn, according to the ſimplicity of his goſpel, to become as *little children*.

Examine yourſelves, therefore, my brethren, whether ye are indeed the *children of GOD:* whether *in ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity; ye have your converſation in this world;* whether the pure religion which ye profeſs, has indeed had ſuch a purifying influence upon your hearts; that ye *are converted* from *all* evil ways, from the indulgence, or dominion of *every* corrupt deſire, or temper. I will aſſiſt your examination: But remember, that it is yours, now to ſit in judgment on *your own* hearts, and ſcrutinize them fully. Let every one leave his neighbor to GOD, and himſelf. Let every one propoſe the queſtions which I ſhall offer, to his own conſcience; and he ſhall receive a *faithful* reply.

Has

Has the corrupt desire of rule, or vain superiority; in no respect, possession of your breasts? Providence has not placed you within reach of the mad flights of ambition, or power; but has the same corrupt temper no influence over you? Have ye no vain anxiety, and indulged desire; of setting yourselves above your brethren? Do ye never exercise any haughty, insolent, or domineering behavior towards any one; no, not even towards your inferiors? Are ye mild, gentle, affectionate, and courteous to all? Do ye never indulge the frequent risings of pride, self-conceit, or vanity; prompting ye to think *more highly of yourselves, than ye ought to think?* and do ye never suffer this corrupt motive, to push ye forward, in endeavoring to set yourselves up as the heads of your little circles, and dictate law to your brethren, and equals? Nay does not your notion of your own superior wisdom, sometimes prompt ye, instead of studying *to be quiet and mind your own business,*

unſeaſonably to intermeddle in your neighbors concerns? Are ye free, like the artleſs infant, from every guilty deſign, and contrivance; to promote whatever is your favorite purſuit? Has the inordinate love of money, which is *the root of all evil;* no place in your hearts? Does the thirſt of gain, never lead ye to the commiſſion of any action, which is, in the leaſt degree, unwarrantable? Does this corrupt motive never induce ye to do to others what ye would not wiſh them to do to you? O does it never *ſhut up your bowels of compaſſion;* never lead ye to *grind the face of the poor?* Does it never make ye anxious overmuch for the *meat which periſheth,* and *cumbered about many things*; while ye neglect the *one thing needful,* the food which *endureth to eternal life?* Do ye indulge no inordinate deſires after the wealth, and the pleaſures of this life? are ye entirely contented, with what GOD, in his wiſdom, has given ye; with the ſtation wherein ye are placed? Can ye lay

your

your hands upon your hearts, and ſay, that ye know, that *godlineſs with contentment is great gain?* Is it your ſtudy, and endeavor, to uſe, and improve to the utmoſt, all the faculties, and talents, which GOD hath beſtowed upon you? Do your hearts continually riſe in joyful gratitude to Him who made, who feeds, and who protects you? Can ye exerciſe a complete dependance upon Him in all things? Can ye freely ſubmit to all his wiſe diſpenſations; and patiently, and thankfully, bear what He thinks beſt for ye; giving up your wills entirely to his? Is it your *firſt* object to pleaſe your celeſtial parent? Is this your hearts deſire, and your conſtant aim? Do ye fear the leaſt circumſtance which can incur his diſpleaſure? Is a ſenſe of his favor your higheſt felicity? I do not mean, the *rapturous feelings*, and *pretended inſpiration;* which enthuſiaſts profeſs; but that calm ſenſe of the divine favor, which is the *rational inference,* reſulting to a mind ſenſible of di-

ligently ſtriving to keep GOD's commandments, and which muſt accompany the *teſtimony of a good conſcience*, and *faith unfeigned*. Do ye open your hearts, gladly to receive every celeſtial, every holy impreſſion? Are ye indeed *poor in ſpirit*, lowly, humble, teachable, and mild? Are the inſtructions of GOD's word *dearer to you than thouſands of gold, and ſilver?* Do ye daily ſearch them with delight, with an earneſt deſire of improvement; with humble, penitent, and obedient hearts; hoping thereby, under his bleſſing to *grow in grace*, and become *wiſe unto ſalvation?* Is envy a ſtranger to your breaſts? Can ye *rejoice with them who rejoice, and weep with them who weep?* Have ye *put away from ye, as becometh ſaints, all bitterneſs, wrath, and malice;* together with every temper which is inconſiſtent with *pure, and fervent love?*

If in this ſolemn hour, ye have faithfully propoſed theſe moſt intereſting queſtions to yourſelves, and your conſciences

ſciences have given ye an *anſwer of peace,* happy, inexpreſſibly happy are ye; Ye are *children of GOD,* and *if children, then* HEIRS; *heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with* CHRIST. Continue, I beſeech ye, in this grace, and ye ſhall enter into *the kingdom prepared for ye, from the foundation of the world.* Ye ſhall not only enter therein, but ſhall *ſhine* in immortal dignity, *as the brightneſs of the firmament, and as the ſtars for ever and ever.*

But, O my brethren, if in theſe reſpects, your conſciences have not afforded ye a favorable reply; how tremendous is your ſituation! The word is gone forth from the lips of *immutable truth, Ye muſt be* thus *converted, and become like little children; harmleſs as doves, and thoroughly renewed in the ſpirit of your minds;* or (I tremble while I deliver it) *ye ſhall in no caſe enter the kingdom of heaven.* How much then is to be done! How important is this ſeaſon of action, which ye have

have been vainly loſing! O delay no longer, from this day change your purſuits; from this moment endeavor to regain the obliterated likeneſs of GOD; to become, in every reſpect, *holy, harmleſs, and undefiled.* Pay no regard to them who decry the purity required by the goſpel, who inſinuate that if ye keep clear from actually committing the moſt notorious vices; ye need not be ſolicitous to regulate the thoughts of your hearts, or govern and correct your tempers. They allow that no unholy diſpoſition, or temper can be admitted into heaven; but they tell ye, that ye ſhall be transformed in the moment of death: Let them find me the paſſage, in any part of the ſacred volume, which declares ſuch a matter; and I will inſtantly give up the neceſſity of a *holy life:* But while that cannot be done, while the ſcriptures declare, as an awful truth; that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the LORD;* and that *unleſs ye are converted,*

verted, and become like little children; in all humility, ſimplicity, innocence, holy fear, and docility; *ye ſhall in no wiſe enter the kingdom of heaven;* duty compels me, with all the power which GOD has lent me, to enforce the neceſſity of continually ſtriving to *grow in grace,* and reaching out into perfection. By GOD's grace I will be clear from the blood of all men. Whether therefore ye will hear, or will forbear; the awful circumſtances wherein ye ſtand, remain immutably fixed by the determination of GOD. If ye will hereafter enter the kingdom of heaven, ye muſt *now* ſtrive with all your might, *to purify yourſelves, even as your* REDEEMER *is pure;* to love GOD, with all your heart, and mind, and ſoul, and ſtrength; and your neighbor as yourſelves: Ye muſt evidence that love by every pious, and benevolent action in your power: Ye muſt *let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your* GOOD WORKS; *and glorify your FATHER who is in heaven.* Matt. v. 16.

If

If ye are faithful, and diligent, in theſe endeavors; He in whom ye *live, and move, and have your being;* will lengthen out your ſpan, till progreſſive holineſs has fully taken poſſeſſion of your ſouls; till ye are *capable* of enjoying the delights of heaven; and meet to be admitted into his bleſsful preſence; till ye are *perfect, as your FATHER who is in heaven is perfect.* Matt. v. 48. Then will he remove ye from this ſtate of imperfection, and ye ſhall enter *into the Joy of your* LORD.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

Religious Profeſſion, without conformable *Practice*, of no avail.

Mark, Chapter xi. Verſe 13.

And ſeeing a fig tree, afar off, having leaves; he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet.

WHEN we conſider how exceeding cloſe an agreement there is in the parables, and diſcourſes of our LORD, between the things expreſſed, and thoſe which are intended to be re-

preſented thereby; how beautiful a *ſimplicity* in the manner of their delivery; by which (though elegant in the higheſt degree) they are adapted to the loweſt human underſtandings; we cannot but be filled with admiration, and *aſtoniſhed at his doctrine.* Nor is his indefatigable attention to our intereſts, and tender love for us; leſs remarkable: The ſublime truths which he every where inculcates, with a dignity, and eaſe, peculiar to himſelf; are continually brought out to view, from every common appearance, and event: He makes the moſt familiar things in life, and even the inanimate world; become *preachers of righteouſneſs* to man: His parables are like the light collected by a burning-glaſs; the ſeveral circumſtances, all adapted to one great end, are as the numerous rays, all tending to their common center; and producing, when collected, the moſt powerful effect: They not only ſhine, but melt down all before them, ſo the divine ſimilitudes

of

of our LORD not only command our admiration, for their fineneſs of thought, and happineſs of expreſſion; but ſuddenly arreſt the fluctuating mind, encircle it with conviction, and force their way to the heart. It was a powerful method of preaching indeed: *He ſpake as never man ſpake*, and no wonder, for *in Him were all the treaſures of wiſdom, and knowledge.*

This tranſaction has all the exact propriety which we find in his parables, and indeed, appears to be very much of the ſame nature; becauſe by one thing expreſſed, another is repreſented. Let us a little examine the particulars, and then conſider the meaning.

We are told that JESUS returning from Bethany, with the twelve, was hungry; *and ſeeing a fig tree, afar off*, full of *leaves;* with the faireſt external appearance poſſible; (for had it not been in the fulleſt foliage, the leaves

could not have been ſo ſeen, *afar off;)* he went to it, ſeeking fruit, but found none; for the Evangeliſt adds, *the time of figs was not yet.*

This paſſage has been thought by ſome to be obſcure, and mankind have entertained various ſuppoſitions, concerning its ſenſe. It has been obſerved, that this happened about the middle of the month Niſan, or Abib; i. e. the latter end of March, or beginning of April; and it has been ſaid, that conſequently it was too ſoon by ſeveral months, to expect ripe figs: It is alſo obſerved from Cant. ii. 13. and Matt. xxiv. 32. that the fig trees only began to put forth freſh leaves, and green figs, at the *entrance of ſummer.* With what propriety, therefore, ſay ſome puny cavillers at revelation; did JESUS curſe the tree, for not producing fruit, when it was not the proper ſeaſon in which to expect it? I anſwer, our LORD curſed the tree with the *utmoſt* propriety; for there is only

only wanting a little attention to the *difference of climate*, and the *nature of the fig tree;* to remove the ſeeming difficulty. The fig tree has a peculiarity, which, I believe, diſtinguiſhes it from almoſt every other known tree upon the face of the earth; namely, that it *always* produces its fruit *twice* in every year: You have, no doubt, obſerved; that after ripe figs are gathered, there appears a ſucceſſion of young fruit; which continues on the trees, not only during the remaining autumn; but alſo through the following winter, and ſpring. Theſe, through the ſeverity of our winters, never ripen *here*; except they are brought to do ſo by artificial ſhelter, and warmth; but it is no way improbable, that under *milder* ſkies, they may often advance, in the next year, to an *early* maturity; and this ſeems to be ſuppoſed, as JESUS went, ſeeking fruit *to eat:* However, be that as it may; a *fruitful* fig tree will have many of this ſecond crop, hanging on it, in the following

lowing ſpring; and conſequently, the tree which has no ſuch proof of its fruitfulneſs, at *that* ſeaſon; may be fairly pronounced an *unfruitful* tree. Neither is the *full foliage* of this tree, at this *early* time; any contradiction to thoſe paſſages already mentioned; or to the nature of things. In Canticles, it is ſaid, that the *winter is paſt;* and in Matthew, that *ſummer is nigh*; when the fig trees put out their leaves, and green figs; neither of which expreſſions, intimate that the ſummer is then *really advanced:* And a climate, which is not ſo far north as this, by nineteen degrees; muſt have its ſummer come on *much earlier* than ours; as the preceding winter muſt alſo have been *milder* than ours uſually are; conſequently, this time was *not too ſoon* for trees to be in full foliage, in ordinary ſeaſons; and perhaps for the ſecond crop, of the former ſummer, to be *ripe:* Beſides this, we know how different ſeaſons vary; ſome may be a month earlier, as others

are

are a month later than uſual; and this might be one of thoſe *early* ſeaſons. And after all, perhaps St. Mark, when he ſays, *the time of figs was not yet;* does not mean to ſpeak of fig trees *in general,* for we know it was not the ſeaſon for ripe *ſummer* figs; but of *this* tree *only,* i. e. the time of *this* tree producing figs was not yet: It had produced nothing in the laſt ſeaſon, neither was there now any appearance of new fruit: The tree was *not in a bearing ſtate:* If it ever had been ſo; it was *now* become *barren.* Thus the ſeeming difficulty vaniſhes; the caviller, I hope, is anſwered; and the expreſſive fitneſs of our LORD's compariſon clearly appears.

Commentators all agree, that our LORD hereby repreſented the *unprofitable* ſtate of the *Jewiſh* nation, and church, at that time; ſignified that their long ſlighted opportunities were *taken from them, and gone for ever*; and pointed out the *ſpeedy deſtruction,* which ſhould

ſoon

ſoon overtake them; for we read, that he *curſed the tree*, and ſaid, *Let no man eat fruit of thee hereafter, for ever: And the diſciples heard it, and in the morning, as they paſſed by again, they ſaw the fig tree* DRIED UP FROM THE ROOTS.

Nothing could more aptly ſignify the ſtate of the *Jewiſh* church, and nation, than *a tree* which advances to its perfection from a *ſmall* beginning, and by *ſlow* degrees: It requires a conſtant attendance, and watchful care: It muſt be protected, in its early ſtate, from *numerous* enemies: It muſt be kept clear from weeds, and duly watered: In the ſweat of his brow, muſt the gardener till the ſoil around it: And to train it to beauty, requires much ſkill, conſtant obſervance; and the ſoft direction of a tender hand. And with all theſe advantages, the hope of the planter muſt be continued through many ſucceſſive ſeaſons, before he ſees the long deſired fruit. Juſt ſo, from a ſmall beginning,

were

were the Jewiſh people led up, through many generations, to the higheſt degree of external perfection. In the infancy of their exiſtence, they were ſurrounded by enemies; which, like noxious weeds ſtealing its nouriſhment, or miſchievous vermin nipping its opening buds, threatened ſpeedy deſtruction to the tender plant. The Egyptian bondage confined its growth, and it had not room to puſh forth its branches, and expand its leaves: But the divine huſbandman tranſplanted it from this untoward land, to a more rich, and luxuriant ſoil: Here it ſtruck deep root, and ſpread forth its branches: Here they grew into a numerous, and proſperous people. The providence of GOD particularly watched over them; watered, and manured them; favored them with many great, and peculiar advantages; continually tilled the ground around them; beſtowing upon them the aſſiſtance of his ſpirit, and ſending his prophets unto them, from time to time. And as the ſkilful planter corrects the

wildneſs of the branches, by giving them a careful and proper direction; ſo the LORD their GOD over-ruled all things for their advantage, and often out of evil, brought forth *good*. Thus they advanced, and flouriſhed, to appearance, for many ſucceeding ages; and the great Planter waited with patience, from ſeaſon to ſeaſon, expecting to receive the fruit of his labor: Yet alas! nothing but a barren luxuriance appeared: There was *plenty of leaves;* a very fair *outſide* profeſſion: They acknowledged the GOD who made them, even as a tree which has been ſkilfully managed, evinces the gardener's care: They had all the *external* pretences of religion; every appearance, from which fruit might be expected; but ſtill they remained *barren*, deſtitute of real holineſs.

As the ſkilful artiſt prunes off the unprofitable ſhoots, nay and ſometimes, even cuts the tree deep into the main ſtem; when milder methods will not check

check its too abundant luxuriance, and bring it to a bearing ſtate; even ſo, did the LORD, frequently cut off much of their proſperity, deſtroy many of their branches, and even wound them deeply, to check their arrogant perverſeneſs, and make them productive of the fruits of holineſs: But alas! vain was his care, vain all the ſkill beſtowed upon them, vain every method adopted to reclaim them: They ſtill remained a *ſtiff-necked*, perverſe people, who *would not* follow the LORD, their GOD. The patience of the great huſbandman endured no longer, the *meaſure of their iniquities was full;* and *their eyes were* judicially *cloſed, that they ſhould not ſee; their ears were ſhut, that they ſhould not hear; and their hearts were hardened, that they ſhould not underſtand.* Their neglected opportunities were then taken from them, and He who had foſtered them with tender care, and ſo long waited, with fond concern, for their fertility; took his leave of his once favorite plant, and

awfully pronounced the deciſive ſentence: *No man eat fruit of thee, hereafter, for ever!* i. e. As you have ſo long rejected my almighty aſſiſtance, and returned my peculiar fondneſs with obſtinate ingratitude; that aſſiſtance is withdrawn, that peculiar fondneſs is no more: You are now left in your *unfruitful* ſtate, and the dreadful conſequences thereof ſhall rapidly overtake you. And ſo they did indeed, for it was but a ſhort time, before they *ſuffered unheard of miſeries;* and *ceaſed to be a people.* Their remains were wretchedly *ſcattered* over the whole earth; and continue to this day, both *a ſtanding evidence of the divine vengeance,* and *a ſtanding, viſible proof of the truth of our goſpel.*

As GOD is a being of infinite juſtice, there muſt be an analogy in all his dealings. He is the *righteous GOVERNOR of the world,* therefore, the nations of the globe, under ſimilar circumſtances, are treated

treated by him in a ſimilar way. If a nation is generally upright before him. If public religion, and real goodneſs, abound therein; they ſhall enjoy the favor of the ALMIGHTY. His watchful care ſhall ever provide for their ſafety: He will root out their enemies from the earth, or turn their animoſity to friendſhip. He will water them with his bleſſing, and beſtow his favorable attention upon them as *the dew from heaven.* He will cheriſh them with the ſunſhine of his favor, will fondly direct them to *proſperity;* will protect their tender bloſſoms from the chilling blaſt, and give them every opportunity of *bearing fruit to his glory.* What proſperity is like that of *ſuch* a nation, which bringeth forth its fruit in due ſeaſon! Happy is ſuch a nation, *whoſe GOD is the LORD.* It ſhall be like *a tree, planted by the rivers of waters; its leaf alſo ſhall not wither; and whatſoever it doth, ſhall proſper.* But, on the contrary, if a nation becomes inſenſible of the divine favor:

if

If the long continued care of the great huſbandman proves in vain, and they perverſely requite his affectionate attention with *evil fruit;* or remain in an abſolutely *unfruitful* ſtate, producing *nothing but leoves;* then, after much patient forbearance; the awful time will come, when he will withdraw his attention from them; curſe them as he curſed the Jewiſh people; and when they, like the fig tree, ſhall be *dried up from the roots.* Such a conduct appears perfectly conſiſtent with the divine attributes, and ſuch have ever been the dealings of the GREAT GOVERNOR, toward every nation whoſe hiſtory we read.

While thus ſpeaking of nations, our view is naturally turned to our own: And alas! what a dreadful proſpect do we behold! What infinite reaſon have we to *fear*, if at one view, we conſider the purity, and jealous juſtice of GOD; and ſurvey our degenerate land, with the ſeveral circumſtances which enhance

its

its guilt! Highly favored as we have been; often ſnatched from ſudden, and great evils; protected from every danger; and foſtered by the ſunſhine of almighty favor; we have been trained up to an *eminent* degree of *glory;* and rendered, not only reſpectable, but *envied* among the nations. Whatever Engliſhman reads the hiſtory of his own country, with ſerious attention, muſt be convinced, that the hand of the LORD hath been eminently for us; and his favor ſignally, and continually exerted towards us. It has been the land of *light* and *liberty:* The glorious light of the goſpel has ſhone with *meridian* ſplendor; and we have *ſat under our own vine, and under our own fig tree; and enjoyed the fruit of our labors.* But what have been our returns to heaven, and what is our preſent ſtate? O *how is the gold become dim, how is the moſt fine gold changed!* We were once *a faithful nation: Righteouſneſs lodged among us,* but now *our ſilver is become droſs, our wine is mixed with water.*

Ah,

Ah, ſinful nation! a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers, children who are corrupters, who have forſaken the LORD, have provoked the HOLY ONE to anger, and are gone away backward. We have indeed, a *fair appearance* of religion among us: So had the Jews. But as it was among them, ſo it is with us: Unrighteouſneſs runs down our ſtreets like a torrent, and horrible wickedneſs appears in every corner of our land: Ah! muſt we not fear leſt we ſhould become *as an oak whoſe leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.*

The Text is a ſtanding reproof, not only to the nations of the world, and the churches of CHRIST, collectively conſidered; but alſo to individuals. Conſidering it in this view alſo, I ſhall make a few obſervations, and endeavor to apply them as I proceed.

It is obſerved of this tree, that it was ſeen *afar off, having leaves:* How aptly does

does this figure to us, the condition of numbers, who have the *form of godlineſs*, but are deſtitute of the *power thereof!* They have *plenty of leaves;* every *fair appearance*, from which, if ſeen *afar off*, we might hope for abundance of fruit: They are, perhaps, regular and conſtant in their morning attendance on the worſhip of GOD; and if they are not *too genteel* to dine early, on one day in ſeven, are equally conſtant in the afternoon: Perhaps they never turn their backs upon the LORD's table: are decent and grave in their deportment; and in every *outward* reſpect, make a fair religious profeſſion: but ſurvey them in their daily callings; follow them from the church to their *home*, to their *ſhop*, to the *market*, to the *exchange;* and alas! they are too often found to be, as *arrogant*, and *proud*, as very *ſlaves* to their corrupt paſſions, and tempers; as arrant dupes to their *avarice* and *other* evil diſpoſitions; as the heathens *who know not GOD*. What then is their re-

ligious profeſſion? Surely it is a mere *luxuriance of leaves.* Reader! Art *thou* the man? I hope the character belongs not to you. I hope you always remember, that unleſs the *temper* of CHRIST is formed in us, *we are none of his.* Without this, vain is all their religious profeſſion. If the ordinances of the goſpel are not *really* the *means of grace* to you: If you do not *conſtantly ſtrive* to *crucify the fleſh, with its* corrupt *affections and luſts.* If it is not your *warmeſt wiſh,* and your *conſtant endeavor* to ſubdue all pride, envy, anger, and every evil temper; and to acquire the ſweet, and amiable *mind which was in* CHRIST: If this is not your *firſt* purſuit; duty obliges me to declare, that you are as deſtitute of the fruits of chriſtianity, as the ſod on which you tread. But GOD forbid that you ſhould be thus deſtitute of our only happineſs; for every unholy temper is an unhappy temper. O rather, on the contrary, ſtrive that you may *grow in grace,* may truly

truly poſſeſs the *fruits of the ſpirit*, and know the calm unſpeakable delight; which a genuine active love of GOD, and man; cauſes to ſpring up in the renewed heart.

I obſerve, ſecondly, that this tree might have been, in time paſt, in a bearing ſtate. And alas! how often has this been the condition of the genuine ſervants of CHRIST! How often have, even they who have borne *much* fruit, whoſe only ſtudy it has been, in time paſt, to *glorify GOD* in *their bodies*, and *in their ſpirits:* How often have we ſadly ſeen, that even they, have relaxed in their attention to ſacred things; and then, through a defect of watchfulneſs, or a neglect of prayer; the ſpiritual life has died away in them; and their corruptions have again rapidly overſpread their ſouls; even as noxious, or uſeleſs weeds ſpeedily over-run a neglected garden. If they have not become notoriouſly wicked, they have loſt all reliſh for ſpi-

ritual things; and at the beſt, have ſunk into a fatal lethargy, a dreadful *luke-warmneſs* of ſpirit. The deluſions of ſenſe, and the vanities of the world, have reſumed their dominion: Their minds have again become, and continued, in an unrenewed ſtate; and too often, *the laſt ſtate of* ſuch men, *has been worſe than the firſt.*

Is there ſuch a one among thoſe who peruſe theſe pages? Is there a hoary ſinner, whoſe youth was ſpent in the ſincere, and ardent ſervice of GOD; but whoſe great work for eternity, has long ſtood ſtill; who having known the power of divine grace, and the pleaſures of holineſs; has nevertheleſs, *made ſhipwreck of his faith*, and turned again to the deluſions of the world, or ſunk into a careleſs indifference? If there is ſuch a one, O GOD, enable me to arreſt his attention, and ſpeak to his heart! O conſider what the great huſbandman has done for you: No care, no attention,

attention, no anxious ſollicitude, no endeavors for your good, have been ſpared: He has protected you from ſurrounding evils: He has dug about you, and manured you; has afforded you every opportunity of bearing fruit to his glory: His pity has prompted him to wonderful forbearance: He has ſtrove to recover the fruitfulneſs of his *once* pleaſant plant: His ſpirit has ſweetly ſuggeſted to you the charms of holineſs: With anxious ſollicitude, has he come, ſeaſon after ſeaſon, ſeeking *fruit;* but, alas! What has he found? Can you bear the thought, that He, who has thus *loved* you, whoſe tender care, and fond anxiety, have long endeavored, but in vain, to raiſe you to the higheſt perfection of your nature, ſhould leave you? O can you bear the thought, that He ſhould be compelled to turn from you, with ſilent regret; and groaning forth the deep reluctant ſigh, abandon you to the tremendous conſequences of your *unfruitfulneſs?* Surely your

your ſoul is ſtung with the idea! Methinks I ſee the ſtarting tear, declare the big emotions of your ſoul. O then come to the *friend of penitent ſinners*, but come with *fervor* of ſpirit; for a ſleepy habit of ſoul is the *moſt fatal* ſymptom, which too often ends in *death*. Cry mightily unto GOD through JESUS CHRIST. He is a GOD of *Love*, and he will *heal your backſlidings, love you freely, and re-eſtabliſh your goings in the way of peace.* But delay not a day, for *you know not what a day may bring forth.* The awful ſentence is, *No man eat fruit of thee, hereafter, for ever.* Or what is equivalent to it, *Cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground?* How dangerous is delay! for perhaps, even *now, the ax* may be *laid to the root of the trees*, or even lifted up, to execute the fatal blow. This moment may be an important, a tremendous one indeed. Now immediate, earneſt prayer; may ſtop the vengeful hand—

" *And*

" *And turn the half-deſcending ſtroke*
" *aſide.*"

If this is loſt, *All* may be loſt for ever, for ere to-morrow dawns *the tree* may be *dried up from the roots;* and then *every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, ſhall be hewn down, and caſt into the fire.*

I have one more ſhort obſervation to offer. It is the nature of the fig tree to bear *twice* in a ſeaſon; to have a *conſtant* ſucceſſion of fruit; and this, if properly managed, *crowding* every point of the branches. Our LORD choſe *this* tree, the more ſtrongly to repreſent the *evil* of *unfruitfulneſs.* Let this obſervation teach us, that we who aim at poſſeſſing the fruits of holineſs; are to ſtrive *with all our might.* If we think to content ourſelves with *ſlow* acquiſitions, we ſhall ſoon become entirely *barren;* whereas we are called upon to *preſs forward;* to STRIVE *for the maſtery;* to be

always

always abounding in the work of the LORD; and to *bring forth fruit,* if poſſible, *an hundred fold.* Surely this calls for *all* our attention, and for our *utmoſt* diligence.

But, if we have not been altogether unfruitful, if we have not thought to content ourſelves with ſlow advances in holineſs; or a low degree of perfection: It is yet a queſtion of infinite importance: Have we been *as fruitful,* as we *might have been?* And here the declining head, and honeſt bluſh, too plainly ſpeak our lamentable deficiency. My brethren, the ſeaſon *is far ſpent,* and many of the habits of holineſs, the *fruits of the ſpirit;* are ſtill *to be* acquired. Let us then *examine ourſelves.* It may be a painful, but it is a *neceſſary* taſk. Do we advance, as we ought, in humility, meekneſs, and a lowly temper? Does our attachment to this world daily leſſen? Are we more *heavenly minded* than heretofore? Does the *love of GOD,* (namely

(namely gratitude for his goodneſs, and a fervent deſire to keep his commandments, and enjoy his favor;) ſweetly fill our hearts with peace, and joy? Does the little, narrow, ungenerous fondneſs for *ſelf, die daily* in us? And does our compaſſion towards all our brethren of mankind, ſweetly conſtrain us to be tender, and affectionate to *all?* Do we more and more, paſs by their weakneſſes; forgive their faults, and pity their wickedneſs? Do our bowels yearn over the ſinners whom we daily meet, with tender concern? Do we ſtrive more and more to *reclaim* them? And can we *boldly* aſſert the honor of our GOD, and REDEEMER; even in oppoſition to the *ridicule of the ſcorner?* In ſhort: Do we aim at the *glory of GOD*, more and more, in all we do, or ſay, or think? Carry theſe queſtions to your retirements, and *daily* propoſe them to yourſelves; ſo they may be of infinite advantage, and tend to make you, as all

the followers of JESUS *ought* to be, *zealous of* GOOD WORKS.

GOD ALMIGHTY fix ſuch a deep ſerioufneſs on all our ſouls, and ſhew us the *vaſt importance* of theſe conſiderations, ſo ſtrongly; that we may not loiter in the heavenly road; but with a holy, watchful ſuſpicion of ourſelves; may *work out our ſalvation, with fear and trembling;* Phil. ii. 12. may *make our calling, and election* SURE; 2 Pet. i. 10. and bring forth fruit *abundantly*, to his honor, and glory; through CHRIST JESUS our LORD. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

The reſpective Characters of the Phariſee and Publican, contemplated.

Luke, Chapter xviii. Verſes 11, 12, and 13.

The Phariſee ſtood, and prayed thus with himſelf, GOD, I thank thee, that I am not as other men; extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as this publican. I faſt twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs. And the Publican, ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes unto heaven; but ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying; GOD, be merciful to me, a SINNER!

AS nothing is more common, than to find them who diſcourſe much on the abſolute neceſſity of good works,

greatly miſunderſtood, and miſrepreſented; I have thought it ſuitable to chuſe this ſubject, to ſhew that while I inſiſt upon it, as abſolutely neceſſary, that every ſincere follower of JESUS, ſhould become *holy in all manner of converſation*, and abound in every good work; I by no means intend to inculcate an opinion, that thoſe good works are, in the ſtrict ſenſe, *meritorious;* or that we can, with any propriety, *claim* the leaſt favor from GOD, as the *due* reward of our imperfect, though beſt ſervices. As nothing appears to me more oppoſite to the goſpel, ſo nothing can be more foreign to my thought, and intention than ſuch a notion: And to prevent my being ſo miſunderſtood; let it now be declared, once for all; that when I preſs upon you *the ſtricteſt, and moſt conſcientious practice of all moral duties;* a conſtant attention, to the improvement of every opportunity, which ye have, of doing all poſſible good; I would, at the ſame time, warn you not

to

to *truſt* in your own imperfect righteouſneſs; and would preach *good works* to you, only as the *conditions* of ſalvation, required by GOD; as the *fruits* and *evidences* of your faith in CHRIST; as a *neceſſary token*, and the *only* one which you can give, of your *gratitude* for the mercies of GOD, particularly the ſtupendous bleſſing of redemption; and as the *only* means of your becoming *happy*, by *ceaſing from ſin;* which, in its own nature is *miſery*; and becoming again, in your degree, like unto GOD; who is infinitely happy in himſelf, and the inexhauſtible fountain of all derivative happineſs.

Theſe ſentiments will, I hope, fully appear to be *well grounded*, in the remarks which follow, on this parable of our LORD.

He who came from heaven, to afford us every needful inſtruction, and to lead us to GOD; ſpake a parable to the audience

dience around him; *that men ought always to pray, and not to faint:* And no ſooner had he finiſhed this parable, and proved that *the fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much;* than he ſpake another alſo, to give juſt ideas, of the *proper* manner of addreſſing the MOST HIGH AND HOLY BEING. Knowing how natural *pride* and *ſelf confidence* are, to the unconverted heart; he ſpake *this, to certain who truſted in themſelves, that they were righteous; and deſpiſed others. Two men,* ſays he, *went up into the temple to pray; the one a Phariſee; and the other a publican.*

The *Phariſees,* were a ſect among the Jews, who were *extremely ſtrict* in the performance of all the *external* duties, which the law commanded; moſt ſcrupulouſly paid their tithes, even of the ſmalleſt herbs of their gardens; mint, aniſe, and cummin; and were rigid in their attention to every *external* circumſtance, which came under the obſervation

obſervation of *men;* and could gain them the reputation of *ſuperior* ſanctity. Thus they nouriſhed the rank pride of their hearts: Thus they fixed an eſtimation on themſelves, as being *holier* than their brethren, the Jews at large; and on this account, claimed to themſelves a higher veneration than what they allowed to other men; arrogated to themſelves the *chief ſeats* in all public aſſemblies; and, in ſhort, every private honor, and public notice which could be paid to them; *greetings in the market places,* and *to be called of men, Rabbi;* or Maſter; a maſter of learning; a title of the higheſt diſtinction. Their ignorant brethren, who ſaw not their hearts, paid them the honor they ſought; and they were univerſally held in eſtimation, by the Jews, as men of the greateſt learning, and ſtricteſt ſanctity; as the higheſt rank among them.

The *publicans* were thoſe who were employed to collect the taxes, tribute, and

and public revenues; of the country. No learning, no ſuperior abilities, no reputation, was neceſſary for this office; for they were deemed the *loweſt*, and moſt contemptible of the people. Their *office* as tax, and tribute gatherers; rendered them hateful in the eyes of thoſe who paid it grudgingly: And the *rapacity*, *extortion*, and *injuſtice*, of many of them; who frequently demanded, and even forced away *more* than they were authorized to take; together with their *cruelty*, in thoſe inſtances, where perſons had but little to pay with; had rendered them (and with ſome juſtice) the objects of general averſion and contempt; ſo that they, and their office, were ſo ſunk in reputation, that no man, who had the leaſt regard for his character, would accept it. Hence the office became, of neceſſity, filled with the *loweſt*, *moſt profligate*, and *worthleſs* of the people. And the Evangeliſts, and all Jewiſh writers, ever mention them as ſuch: *Publicans and ſinners*, are

are generally mentioned in ſcripture together by which is ſignified, either that they were deemed *more notorious* ſinners, than the reſt of the people; or, which amounts to much the ſame; that the company they herded with, were of the *moſt wicked* and *profligate* ſort. This ſuppoſition, I ſay, amounts to the ſame as the other; becauſe it is an invariable rule, that any man's *taſte*, and *diſpoſition*; may *always* be known by the company with which he aſſociates.

Theſe two deſcriptions of men, form the ſtrongeſt contraſt imaginable. One of each of theſe, our LORD, in this beautiful parable, brings *into the temple, to pray.*

The phariſee advances, with all the boldneſs which ſelf-conceit, and the deepeſt ignorance of himſelf could inſpire. Not conſidering in whoſe preſence he was; that he was approaching a GOD of unſpotted rectitude, and jea-

lous holineſs; who ſaw into the inmoſt receſſes of his heart; he *ſtood, and prayed thus within himſelf: GOD, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers; nor even as* THIS *publican;* on whom he then turned his eyes with contempt, and whom he conſidered as infinitely inferior to himſelf. It muſt be admitted, that here is a kind of thankſgiving: But he does not approach his maker, with that modeſty, and humility; which would occaſion his thankſgiving to be accepted. Nor is the ſubject matter of it, founded in truth; but in *pride, ſelf-conceit,* and *uncharitableneſs.* He was ſo far from thinking of himſelf *ſoberly, as he ought to think*; that he dared even to tell the ALMIGHTY, that he was *not as other men*; to ſet himſelf up above his brethren; and to introduce *pride,* the moſt deteſtable of all vices; the *very ſpirit of the devil;* even into his *devotions.* He was ſo far from poſſeſſing, any degree of that *love, which hopeth all things,* and *thinketh*

no

no evil; that even in the more immediate preſence, of the MOST HIGH, and ALL-WISE GOD; he preſumed to ſtep into His place, to ſcrutinize the heart of his poor trembling neighbor; and to boaſt that he was not *even as* THIS *publican.* Had he thanked GOD, that he was not an extortioner, or unjuſt, or an adulterer: with *ſuitable* diſpoſitions of mind; it might have been ſo far well. i. e. Had he, under a deep ſenſe of his proneneſs to wickedneſs; made a humble confeſſion to GOD of his ſins, implored his pardon, and begged his aſſiſtance, in every future time of temptation; there would not have been the *leaſt* impropriety, in adding, his thankſgiving for that preſerving grace, which had ſaved him from falling into ſuch notorious offences; provided he had mentioned it as a particular inſtance of *GOD's* goodneſs to him, had attributed the glory to *GOD,* and aſſumed *no* merit to himſelf: On the contrary, it would have been highly proper, and becom-

ing. But this was not the caſe, for he even proceeded to enumerate his *works of ſupererogation,* and to tell the GOD who made him, that he was ſo far from all theſe things, ſo exact in his duty; that he did even *more* than was commanded. *I faſt twice in the week,* ſays he, and I am ſo far from injuſtice, that *I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs.* Poor wretch! He appears to be ſo full of himſelf, that he even forgets that it is *GOD* who alone *poſſeſſeth all things;* and that his portion of them, is only *lent* to him, for a ſeaſon; as an honorable opportunity, of uſing them to advantage, in the character of a faithful *ſteward.*

Let us look behind the inſolent vain creature, and behold! *afar off,* at the moſt reſpectful diſtance; perhaps even in the outward court of the temple, the court of the gentiles; with his head bowing down, and his ſtreaming eyes fixed on the ground; not daring *ſo much as to lift them up to heaven;* ſtands the poor

poor, guilty, trembling, penitent, broken-hearted publican. In the ſtrong agony of his laboring ſoul, he *ſmites on his breaſt;* and with the moſt lowly ſelf-abaſement, in one ſhort, but pathetic ſentence; expreſſes the greatneſs, ſovereignty, and goodneſs of GOD; implores his mercy, with humble hope; and confeſſes his own guilt, and unworthineſs. *GOD be merciful to me, a* SINNER! As the former part of this parable finely expreſſes the character of the phariſee, ſo here is all the energy of the deepeſt diſtreſs, eagerly reaching after mercy. Here is all the conflict of paſſions, which muſt agitate the boſom, of one *ſuddenly* and ſtrongly convinced of his ſins; hope, fear, deſire, ſorrow, ſhame, and humility. And they were accepted by GOD. He who *deſires not the death of a ſinner, but would rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs, and live;* heard, and attended to every groan he uttered; ſaw the genuine ſincerity of his humble ſoul, and gave him an anſwer of peace;

peace; for *I tell you*, ſays the REDEEMER, that *this man went down to his houſe juſtified, rather than the other.* i. e. As he petitioned for mercy, GOD gave him the abundance of his mercy; accepted his perſon, heard his petition, forgave his iniquities, and beheld him with ſuch an eye of favor, that his tranſgreſſions ſhould be no more remembered to his condemnation. And it is to be obſerved, that the affectionate *readineſs* of our heavenly FATHER, to forgive the tranſgreſſions of his returning children, is here moſt beautifully inſinuated: The man *went down to his houſe* juſtified: The mercy for which he ſo ardently petitioned was *immediately* beſtowed. All the expreſſive beauties of fine writing, are ſo crouded into every diſcourſe, and parable, of our LORD; that the attentive reader is continually charmed, and delighted; and ſcarce a ſentence is to be found without ſome inſtance, which proves the truth of the obſervation, that *he ſpake as never man ſpake.*

I have

I have thus laid before you, a ſhort comment upon theſe two characters; from whence ariſe ſeveral plain, and important obſervations.

1. One of the moſt obvious inferences from the parable is, that when we pay our addreſſes to GOD, if we would be accepted by him; we muſt approach him, not as ſelf-righteous perſons, but as *ſinners*. Who is there to whom this character doth not belong? Where is the man who can ſay, that he hath *always* kept *all* GOD's commandments, and that his heart knows no corruption? Till a clean thing can be brought out of an unclean, ſuch a character will not be found. No, *we have all ſinned; and come ſhort of the glory of GOD*, in which the firſt man was created. Our weakened powers have not duly reſiſted the ſuggeſtions of the tempter; and our perſonal tranſgreſſions, have incurred the wrath of the ALMIGHTY GOD, who made us. The ſcripture, therefore,

which

which is a law unto us; which hath revealed unto us, the unſpotted holineſs of GOD, the degeneracy of human nature, and the guilt of our offences; this ſcripture *hath concluded all under ſin, guilty before GOD; that every mouth may be ſtopped.* Had not this been the caſe, there would have been no occaſion for a REDEEMER: *The whole need not a phyſician, but they who are ſick; and* JESUS CHRIST *came not to call the righteous, but ſinners, to repentance;* yet we are aſſured that *he gave himſelf, a ranſom for* ALL; *and taſted death for* EVERY *man;* conſequently every man muſt be a ſinner. As *ſinners,* therefore, we muſt ever draw near to GOD, confeſſing our tranſgreſſions, and imploring his mercy.

2. I obſerve further, that our character, as ſinners, muſt utterly *exclude all boaſting.* Had our powers been unimpaired, had we been able ſo to reſiſt all evil, as by our *own* ſtrength, to have kept all GOD's commandments perfectly

ly, yet even in ſuch a ſuppoſed caſe, we could have no merit, in the ſtrict ſenſe, to plead before GOD; for we ſhould have done no more than was our duty to do, and ſhould have been, at beſt, but *unprofitable ſervants.* But on the contrary, as the obedience of the *beſt* of us, is ſo very imperfect; becauſe our good works have been intermixed with ſo many tranſgreſſions, and have ſo much defect adhering to them; it is ſtrange, that the vanity, and ignorance, of the human heart ſhould ever prompt it to boaſt of any good works, as *meritorious* in the ſight of GOD. If in the abundant multitude of his mercies he condeſcends to accept our beſt ſervices, and from his wonderful loving kindneſs to honor them with a reward; yet ſurely we have no right, on account of any thing in ourſelves, to *claim* that reward. If he affords us his grace, and thereby enables us to reſiſt temptation; to *die unto ſin,* and *to riſe again unto righteouſneſs, and true holineſs;* even if

we ſhould happily attain unto the full reſtoration of the likeneſs of GOD on our ſouls; ſurely the glory belongeth unto Him, and not to us. It is *his* grace which *is ſufficient for us*, his, therefore, muſt be the praiſe, though ours is the amazing benefit. Nothing, of conſequence, is more true, than that *by grace, we are ſaved, through faith, and that not of ourſelves, it is the gift of GOD* through JESUS CHRIST.

3. We may yet proceed to obſerve the odiouſneſs of phariſaical arrogance, and pride, in the ſight of the MOST HIGH; and the power of humility, to recommend us to GOD. And ſurely nothing can be more ſuitable to our character as ſinners than humility, and the deepeſt ſelf-abaſement: The ſacred page of revelation continually inculcates this ſuitable diſpoſition, and teaches us how acceptable it is in his ſight *with whom we have to do.* Thus we are informed, that *his eyes are upon the haughty, that*

that he may bring them down; but that *he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.* And again, that *he is nigh unto them who are of a broken heart, and ſaveth ſuch as are of a contrite ſpirit:* That *though the LORD be high, yet he hath reſpect unto the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off:* And more fully to declare his approbation of this amiable temper, he ſaith by his prophet, *I dwell in the high, and holy place, with him alſo, who is of a contrite, and humble ſpirit; to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the hearts of the contrite:* Further, our LORD, at the concluſion of the parable which we have been conſidering, declares that *every one who exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he who humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.* i. e. That he, who in *the vanity of his deceived heart, goeth about to eſtabliſh his own righteouſneſs* as meritorious, *hath not ſubmitted to the righteouſneſs of GOD,* in the ſcheme of redemption; and therefore, as he truſts not alone to JESUS CHRIST for juſtification before GOD,

he has no reaſon to expect that he ſhall receive the benefit thereof; but he who *humbleth himſelf* for his tranſgreſſions, and approaches the FATHER of MERCIES with all that deep ſelf-abaſement, penitent contrition, and every ſuitable diſpoſition, which become his character as a ſinner, *ſhall be exalted* by the power of divine grace ſtrengthening his weakneſs, and giving ſucceſs to his own faithful, diligent, and unwearied endeavors. His paſt tranſgreſſions ſhall be forgiven, through the atonement of JESUS CHRIST, and he ſhall be raiſed from the *death of ſin*, unto the *life of righteouſneſs*; ſhall be enabled to *walk in all the commandments, and ordinances of the* LORD *blameleſs;* and be ſo thoroughly *renewed in the ſpirit of his mind,* that he ſhall riſe into the holy, happy likeneſs of his REDEEMER: The mind ſhall be in him *which was alſo in* CHRIST JESUS; and he ſhall be *thoroughly furniſhed unto every good word, and work; perfecting holineſs in the fear of the LORD.* Then ſhall he be ripe

ripe for the perfect conſummation of bliſs, even for his final exaltation to the glories of his FATHER's kingdom.

4. Let us learn from hence alſo, that the true follower of JESUS doth not deſpiſe his brethren. The wretched ſons of wickedneſs are the greateſt objects of his compaſſion. While he thankfully acknowledges with the Apoſtle, *By the grace of GOD, I am what I am,* he conſiders himſelf as *the leaſt of all ſaints:* He will never be heard to thank GOD, that he is *not as this publican:* On the contrary, his bowels of compaſſion yearn over his erring brother, and the love of CHRIST conſtraining him, he will, like his LORD, on ſuitable occaſions, intermix with publicans, and ſinners; with the worſt, and moſt depraved of the human race; if, by any means, he may be an honored inſtrument of ſaving ſome. He paſſes no ſevere cenſures on others, for paſt miſcarriages, when the preſent ſtate of their minds appears to be

be penitent contrition. But he rejoices to ſee them coming to the *knowledge of the truth.* He labors to bring them more acquainted with the FRIEND of penitent ſinners, and is ſo far from adding diſtreſs to ſorrow, from *breaking the bruiſed reed;* that he gladly leads the mourner to *the fountain which is opened for ſin, and for uncleanneſs,* and bids him *waſh and be clean.* And his heart, flaming with the love of GOD, and his neighbor; and dilated with that holy generoſity which is peculiar to true chriſtianity; joins, while on earth, in the joy which is in heaven, over every ſinner who repenteth.

An earneſt advocate as I am, for that ſtrict morality of conduct, and heart; that entire holineſs *in all manner of converſation,* which the goſpel commands; I think it proper to add, that though we have no merit to plead before GOD, on account of our good works, yet thoſe good works are *abſolutely neceſſary,* if we will be ſaved; becauſe they are the conditions

ditions required of us by GOD, and he hath commanded them; becauſe in doing them, we are imitating GOD, and improving the talents which he hath intruſted to us; and becauſe we are thereby, under the aid of the Divine Spirit, forming our own minds to a divine, a heavenly taſte; and ſo training them, that they ſhall become *capable* of enjoying the felicity of heaven; for it is an evident truth, that even *the pleaſures which are at GOD's right hand*, would be no pleaſures to a mind that ſtill retained its ſinful taſte, and bias. We meet with many, whoſe cuſtom it is, to condemn every one who enlarges much on the neceſſity of a good life, as a *mere moral* preacher, a *legal* preacher; but theſe words when ſo applied are without any fixed meaning. Our LORD himſelf was a *moral* preacher, for if his whole ſermon on the mount is not a *moral* diſcourſe, I know not what is. And ſurely no chriſtian will deny this to be the beſt dicourſe which ever was delivered on earth.

earth. Strict morality is so far from being unsuitable to the gospel, that the gospel is itself the *most perfect system of ethics*, extending even to the government of the thoughts, and complete purification of the soul. But these persons, who thus decry good works, are continually extolling *salvation by faith*. My brethren, be not deceived: what GOD hath joined together, let not man presume to put asunder. It is indeed *by grace*, or the unmerited favor of GOD, that *we are saved, through faith*, but it is a faith which is *made perfect by works*; James ii. 22. Nay more, which even *purifieth the heart*. Acts xv. 9. Faith in JESUS CHRIST is the mean by which we lay hold on eternal life; but good works, and holiness of heart, are the *never-failing* fruits of that faith, unless it is a mere dead notional assent of the mind, without a conformable practice. This is no better than the faith of the devils, and they who have nothing more, must, like them, not only *believe*, but *tremble*.

Extremes

Extremes of all kinds, are what human nature is continually prone unto. Called as I am, by providence, to preach the goſpel of purity; I wiſh to guard you againſt two oppoſite evils, on either of which rocks you may make ſhipwreck of your ſalvation. I warn you againſt truſting to your own righteouſneſs, and depending on any ſuppoſed merit of your own, for juſtification in the ſight of GOD. I caution you never to value *yourſelves* for any attainments in religion, but while you *let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they ſee your good works;* ever to look up to heaven, and ſay, *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory.* At the ſame time, I alſo bid you beware of that antinomian doctrine, which makes light of good works, and holineſs of heart; leſt you fall into the ſnare of the deſtroyer, even into the deluſion of the ancient Nicolaitans, *whoſe deeds,* ſaith the REDEEMER, *I hate.* Rev. ii. 6. On the contrary, O ſhew forth your faith *by* your works, and *be always*

abounding in the work of the LORD, remembering that you are called to ADORN *the doctrine of GOD, our* SAVIOR, *in all things, forasmuch as you know that your labor in the* LORD *shall not be in vain.*

We have thus contemplated the reſpective character of the *Phariſee*, and the *Publican*, and I hope with profit. But there ariſes to my mind, a ſhort hint more, which, I truſt, will be received by you as it ought, in chriſtian love. Which of you is the *Phariſee?* Which of you is the *Publican?* Examine yourſelves, and your conſciences will give a faithful reply. Let the *Phariſee* recollect that *the lofty looks of man ſhall be humbled, and the haughtineſs of man ſhall be brought down.* Let him remember that *woe* is denounced, *unto them who are wiſe in their own eyes, and prudent in their own ſight.* Let him no longer ſtand up in vain, and guilty confidence, but fall on his face before GOD, and ſay, *Now mine eye ſeeth thee,* as a GOD *jealous in holineſs,*

holineſs, who ſearcheſt the heart; *wherefore I abhor myſelf in duſt, and aſhes.* Let him no more ſay to his brother, *ſtand by thyſelf, for I am holier than thou;* but let him learn even of the poor trembling publican, adopt his humility, and uſe his ſtrong, and acceptable petition, *GOD be merciful to me, a* SINNER!

Which of you is the *Publican?* No longer bow down your dejected countenance. Wipe away the tears from your eyes. Still, O ſtill the ſighs which heave your laboring breaſt. *Ariſe, ſhine, for thy light is come. Though heavineſs may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning.* Lift up your trembling head. Your ſins are forgiven. The grace of GOD *is ſufficient for you.* Go, AND SIN NO MORE.

SERMON VIII.

The complicated Evil of intemperate Drinking.

Proverbs, Chapter xx. Verſe 1.

Strong drink is raging, and whoſoever is deceived thereby, is not wiſe.

HOW greatly is it to be lamented, that human depravity is ſuch, that diſcourſes on regularity of behavior, and purity of conduct in general, have ſo ſeldom their due, and deſired weight. There are even men, (and I fear they are not few) who can regularly attend the ſervice of the church, and liſten to the weekly lectures from the pulpit, which perhaps inculcate that moderation, and holineſs, which becomes

becomes chriſtians; who can approve them while not applied to themſelves, but who will, notwithſtanding, keep cloſe to ſome favorite crime, in which it ſuits their tempers to indulge. Hence it becomes neceſſary, that we, who are commiſſioned to propagate that religion which requires *all* the human faculties to be employed, with diligence, in the cauſe of holineſs; ſhould purſue vice from one retreat, to another; and pull down the ſtrong holds of Satan in the human heart. If we are the honored inſtruments, in the hands of GOD, to bring you to ſalvation; we muſt ſtrip you of your vices, even of thoſe pleaſing ſins, which do moſt eaſily beſet you. And if general recommendations of temperance, and purity, are not found ſufficient for this purpoſe; we muſt attack thoſe vices ſeparately, muſt lay open their deformity, and preſs ye to conſider your own fatal miſtakes, and moſt imminent danger, while you harbor vipers in your boſoms; while *one* habitual,

and

and indulged ſin remains unſubdued. We *muſt* do this, becauſe we are charged to declare unto you the *whole* counſel of GOD, and becauſe *the wrath of GOD is revealed againſt* ALL *ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs.* Rom. i. 18.

No crime is more common than *drunkenneſs*, and it is with pain, I find it neceſſary to add, that ſuch is the deplorable ſtate of the time, that none is conſidered as more trifling; nay, if it be not continued ſo habitually, as to deſtroy a man's *worldly* welfare; any excuſe, be it inſignificant as it may, is too generally deemed ſufficient. Indeed if it is committed but occaſionally, and ſeldom, it is hardly conſidered as a crime at all. Yet ſtrange indeed is this, while the MOST HIGH GOD hath ranked it with other *enormous* iniquities; hath declared, in the ſtrongeſt terms, his utter abhorrence of it, and denounced the bittereſt vengeance againſt it.

it. *If there be among you,* ſaith the inſpired lawgiver of the Jews; *a root that beareth gall, and wormwood; and it ſhall come to paſs, that he ſhall bleſs himſelf in his heart, ſaying, I ſhall have peace, though I walk in the ſtubbornneſs of my heart, to add* DRUNKENNESS *to thirſt, the LORD will not ſpare him, but the anger of the LORD, and his jealouſy, ſhall ſmoke againſt that man.* Deut. xxix. 18, 19, 20. So accordingly, among the Jews, it was puniſhable with death. *If a man have a ſtubborn and rebellious ſon,—his father, and his mother, ſhall lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place: And they ſhall ſay unto the elders of his city; "This our ſon is ſtubborn, and rebellious; he will not obey our voice, he is a* GLUTTON, *and a* DRUNKARD; *and all the men of his city ſhall ſtone him with ſtones, that he die.* Deut. xxi. 18—21.

And alſo, in every ſucceeding age after Moſes, the ſages, and prophets, were

were continually denouncing the anger of the LORD againſt this vice, and proclaiming the moſt dreadful deſtruction, which ſhould flow from it. *Be not among wine bibbers, among riotous eaters of fleſh,* ſaith Solomon, *for the* DRUNKARD, *and the glutton, ſhall come to poverty.* Prov. xxiii. 20, 21. *Woe unto them,* ſaith Iſaiah, *who riſe up early in the morning, that they may follow ſtrong drink; who continue until night, till wine inflame them. Woe unto them who are mighty to drink wine, and men of ſtrength to mingle ſtrong drink.* Iſa. v. 11, 22. *While they are drunken,* ſays Nahum, *they ſhall be devoured as ſtubble full dry.* Nahum i. 10.

And indeed, to a mind which admits but a momentary conſideration, the reaſons are abundantly clear, why this deteſtable vice, which is ſo common among men, ſhould be ſo abominable in the ſight of GOD.

GOD gave us our nature, dignified, and diſtinguiſhed as it is, by the *ſuperiority* of our Reaſon over all the reſt of his earthly creatures. But drunkenneſs is inconſiſtent with our nature. It is an *unnatural* vice, becauſe, for a time, it deſtroys the diſtinction with which GOD has honored us. It degrades us, not to the level of the brutes, but infinitely below them; for they never obſcure the glimmering of reaſon which GOD has given them: They follow nature, and ſatisfy the calls of hunger, and thirſt; but when do we ſee them exceed the proper bounds of neceſſary appetite? So that to term drunkenneſs a beaſtly vice, is to uſe a wrong expreſſion: It is an unfounded ſlander on the innocent brute creation.

Reaſon is the vicegerent of heaven, in the breaſt of man; the primitive guide which GOD fixed in every boſom, to direct the conduct of the man: Accordingly reaſon, if honeſtly conſulted, directs

rects us to all thoſe virtues, which are natural to a good being; and which properly belong to us, as related to GOD, and to each other. But what deplorable, what dreadful deviations from this beautiful line of rectitude, have been occaſioned by this accurſed vice! Sacred, and prophane hiſtory, (both of which afford chiefly a hideous chronicle of the *weakneſs* and *wickedneſs* of mankind) abound with numerous inſtances. And indeed it cannot be otherwiſe, in the nature of things; for when all government is ſuperſeded in the mind; when the reaſon is eclipſed, and the underſtanding veiled under a cloud; the furious paſſions are no longer under a bridle, they burſt forth, and alternately aſſume the domineering reign of violence; and the poor, perverted, miſerable will, having loſt its guide, is toſſed about, as a veſſel without a rudder, in the fury of a ſtorm. In ſuch a ſtate, what can follow but *confuſion, and every evil work?*

Surely it is by no means a trifling offence againſt the MOST HIGH GOD, thus to obſcure his likeneſs, in which we were created; thus to deſert the honorable poſt of ſuperiority, in which his providence has placed us in this his creation; thus to expoſe ourſelves to all that tide of evil, which may flow in upon us, when we have cloſed up the eyes of our underſtanding in darkneſs, and removed the heavenly protector from our breaſts; when we have *opened all* the avenues to ſin, and *invited* the tempter to come in, and take *full* poſſeſſion. No offence againſt the GREAT, and HOLY GOD, can be trifling; but in the hour of cool reflection, this appears a crime of *conſummate* guilt, and *peculiar* heinouſneſs. Well may it be abominable in the ſight of GOD, ſince it is not a ſingle ſin: *Legion* is its name. It is the higheſt affront, and greateſt ingratitude, towards GOD; and its dire train of followers are, *laſciviouſneſs, fornication, inceſt, adultery, uncleanneſs* of every

every kind, *quarrellings, rage, malice, murder,* and every madneſs which hell can ſuggeſt, or which is inimical to the rights of ſociety. Will ye deem drunkenneſs any longer a trifling offence? Are theſe trifles? Would ye wiſh to ſtain your ſouls with theſe enormities? To ruſh into all theſe atrocious evils? Ye ſtart at the thought when ſober. Yet theſe are the daily conſequences of this horrible vice: And if the preſerving grace of GOD is not infinitely better to ye, than ye deſerve; by removing the occaſions of evil out of your way; though ye may have hitherto eſcaped, ye may yet be permitted to fall. But perhaps it is a queſtion proper to be propoſed: Have ye hitherto eſcaped? The moſt ſhocking of theſe evils ye have probably eſcaped, ye have not been guilty of *murder*: But have ye never been betrayed, by intoxication, into *furious quarrellings* and *rage?* Has *malice* never taken its riſe from the drunken hour? When the awful controul of religion,

ligion, and reaſon, has been buried in the immoderate cup; have ye never *blaſphemed* the GOD who made you, never madly *imprecated his fury* on your own heads, or *curſed* your brethren? Have your corrupt paſſions, when deprived of their proper reſtraint, never led ye into any degree of laſciviouſneſs? On the contrary, is there not the greateſt reaſon to fear, that the GOD, whoſe penetrating eye pierces to the *ſecrets* of your hearts; can, in addition to your drunkenneſs, deſcry *whoredom*, or *adultery*, in the black catalogue of your concealed vices? If ſo, ye have a dreadful proof in yourſelves, that *ſtrong drink is raging, and* that *whoſoever is deceived thereby, is not wiſe.*

Another reaſon, why this vice is ſo odious in the ſight of GOD, is, that it counterworks his intention, in placing ye in the rank which ye hold in ſociety. GOD hath, to every ſtation, appointed its proper courſe of action. Life is not

a ſeaſon

a ſeaſon of negligent ſupineneſs, but of *diligence*, in ſome reſpect, or other. No man liveth for himſelf alone: Every one is a debtor to thoſe around him, and as GOD is himſelf a juſt being, he requires the fulleſt juſtice of his creatures. Your children, your families, have claims upon ye, which ye unjuſtly neglect to anſwer, if ye conſume your ſubſtance in *drunkenneſs* and *riotous living*. Ye render yourſelves incapable of the duties required of ye. Ye bring poverty and rags, not upon yourſelves only, but upon them who are the innocent ſufferers for your guilt. But perhaps ye may anſwer, that your ſubſtance is ſufficient to admit your exceſs, and that this is, therefore, not the conſequence. Then, let me tell ye, there are yet others behind, who have claims, and moſt preſſing claims, upon ye; the *poor and needy*. And if, inſtead of *feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked*, with your ſuperfluity, ye conſume it on your luſts, it is a flagrant fraud, and they are injured, to whom ye *owe* the various

duties

duties of benificence; to whom GOD has given *a claim* upon ye, for *all* the aſſiſtance which ye can give. Your ſubſtance is not your own. Ye are but *ſtewards* thereof, and woe be to him who ſhall conſume his LORD's property in the baſe gratification of his own depraved appetite. Yet what is ſtill worſe, if ye ſo abuſe the gifts of GOD, ye teach your children, and dependents, by your examples, the ſame wretched conduct. O what is it ye thus teach them? To affront the MAJESTY OF HEAVEN, by drowning the reaſon, and debaſing the ſouls which he has given them. To violate his commands, and even to *defy* his threatenings. To expoſe themſelves, in the unguarded hour of intoxication, to *all* the temptations of Satan, to *every* ſpecies of wickedneſs. To *lay open* their hearts, to the corrupt turbulence of *every* ungoverned paſſion, and perhaps, to plunge into a ſea of iniquity, in which their temporal, and eternal peace, ſhall be wofully wrecked; and for which the penitence of their whole lives can never

make

make amends. This is the horrible leſſon which the drunkard teaches his own children. Thus carefully does he *train them* for hell. Thus does he *ſtrive* to render them *veſſels fitted for deſtruction*, and to ſecure their condemnation. O Fathers, can ye bear the thought? Perhaps ye have not conſidered it before. For GOD's ſake, for the ſake of your innocent offſpring, and untutored dependants, as well as for your own ſouls ſake; conſider it *now*, and determine, by the aid of divine grace, never to inculcate this horrible inſtruction, never to ſet this dreadful example again.

But a *right* example is requiſite, not to our children, and families only; but to all around us. It is due to the commands of GOD, who requires that we ſhould not only practice, but *recommend* his precepts to others. It is *due* to mankind, from motives of compaſſion, and love; as their intereſt, their tendereſt

intereſt, may, in ſome ſenſe, be involved therein. So far, therefore, as our evil examples tend to influence others, ſo far we may be properly ſaid to take them by the hand, and turn them into *the broad way which leadeth to deſtruction.* And where the corrupt example has not this evil influence, the ſottiſh ſons of exceſs, muſt become *odious* in the eyes of the ſober. Hereby all their greateſt opportunities of being ſerviceable are deſtroyed: Yet it is indiſputably true, that GOD requires every man to be *as uſeful as poſſible*, during the whole of his paſſage through life, and conſequently it is incumbent on every one to conciliate the affections, and eſteem, of thoſe around him; and to maintain as much fair, and honorable influence over them as poſſible; in order, that he may be as extenſively uſeful as he can. O then to what a dreadful account muſt they hereafter be brought, who to gratify this baſeſt of vices, ſuffer themſelves ſo to ſink into contempt, that even their

good

good offices, can be of little, or no avail in the world!

Again, GOD muſt deteſt the drunkard, becauſe his crime is the *baſeſt abuſe* of the gifts of GOD.

The FATHER of MERCIES has beſtowed upon us innumerable comforts, which he has empowered, and authorized us, if we *receive* them *with thankfulneſs, richly to enjoy. What can* man *render unto the LORD for all his benefits?* Shall he even abuſe thoſe very gifts, by perverting them from the benevolent uſe for which they were given? Shall he even turn them into an *affront* to the bountiful donor? If there be ſuch a corruption as ingratitude, ſurely this is the darkeſt appearance of it. No wonder, that *anger of the LORD, and his jealouſy, ſhould ſmoke againſt that man.* If this is the return made to that bountiful GOD, *who openeth his hand, and ſatisfieth the deſires of every living thing*, how juſt, nay

how merciful, muſt he appear, when his providence cuts off the uſual reſources of ſupply, from the wretch who has ſo abuſed his bounty; clothes him with poverty, and rags; and to bring him ſobe:ly to his ſenſes, delivers him over to the bitter pangs of unſatiated hunger, and unallayed thirſt. Nay muſt we not awfully adore his juſtice, if he compels the ungrateful creature to drink, even to the dregs, the cup of bitterneſs, and trembling, which his hand hath mingled; even the cup of the fury, and wrath of the LORD.

Again, drunkenneſs muſt be the moſt abominable vice in the ſight of GOD, becauſe men thereby, not only deprive themſelves of the fair bleſſing of health, but even ſhorten, and deſtroy, the lives with which GOD has favored them. His providence *watches over them for good*, and his long ſuffering ſpares them, that if they will not obſtinately perſiſt to harden their hearts, they may re-

cover

cover from their errors, and turn unto him: But the drunkard fights againſt even the divine mercy, *does* DESPITE *unto the ſpirit of grace*, refuſes to be favored by heaven, and even *ſtrives* to deſtroy the life, and cut ſhort the ſeaſon of repentance, which the wonderful mercy of GOD is ſtill willing to beſtow. If this be not madneſs, the moſt deſperate madneſs, I pray ye, what is? The ſuicide, who in a fit of fear, terror, or deſpair, or even rage; can *ſuddenly* lift his hand againſt himſelf, let out his own hearts blood, and precipitately ruſh into eternity; is, I had almoſt ſaid, an innocent character, compared to him, who can coolly, and deliberately ſwallow poiſon after poiſon, for a courſe of years, till he attains the dreadful end. If we compare the two crimes together, it may ſeem ſome mitigation of the former, (horrible as it is) that the judgment is blinded, and perhaps the poor wretch has ſtruck the deſperate blow, before he

he had time for recollection; but the drunkard is the *cooleſt* and *moſt determinate* ſelf-murderer under heaven, and even infinitely the moſt guilty, for he ſtrenuouſly perſiſts in *daily* affronting the GOD who made him, and crowned him with bleſſings: He is ſo far from thanking him for the greateſt of theſe bleſſings, the bleſſing of life; that he even refuſes to keep it, nay he horridly ſpurns at the long ſuffering of GOD, which ought to lead him to repentance; and in effect he ſays, " I *will* die, and thou *ſhalt not* ſhew mercy on me."

Such is drunkenneſs. A crime of deepeſt ſtain, nay, is it not almoſt all crimes in one, inaſmuch as it is the parent of every enormity?

That men, in the corrupt ages of pagan darkneſs, when their hearts were blinded, *through the ignorance that was in them*, ſhould join this to their other numerous

numerous wickedneſſes, is perhaps no wonder; but that, in chriſtian lands, where the clouds of ignorance no longer hang ſo heavy upon the mind, the demon of intoxication ſhould hold ſuch extenſive ſway; and that they who know aſſuredly that *the wrath of GOD is revealed, againſt* ALL *ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men,* ſhould thus *repeatedly* bid defiance to the MAJESTY OF HEAVEN, is indeed a matter of equal ſurprize, and lamentation. Strange indeed! that they who profeſs a religion which requires *all* purity; ſhould practice, *habitually* practice, that which is one of the greateſt crimes in itſelf, and which tends to *all* wickedneſs! Dreadful indeed, that the ſame mouths, which praiſe the giver of all good, ſhould be employed in abuſing his gifts, and affronting his majeſty; that the ſame tongues which confeſs, and publiſh the goodneſs of GOD; ſhould, under the dire influence of intoxication,

toxication, be the ready vehicles of ſin; and perhaps even blaſphemouſly mouth the heavens! Gracious GOD! to what a degree of degeneracy can thy creatures arrive! How aſtoniſhing the mercy thou extendeſt to them!

Much has already been ſaid, to prove the atrocious nature of this too common crime, to which may be added, that the New Teſtament, which gives *line upon line, and precept upon precept;* abounds with commandments to ſhun this enormity, and ſevere denunciations of vengeance againſt it. *Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor* DRUNKARDS *ſhall inherit the kingdom of GOD.* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Now the works of the fleſh are theſe, envyings, murders,* DRUNKENNESS, *revellings, and ſuch like; of which I tell you before, as I have alſo told ye in time paſt; that they who do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of GOD.* Gal. v. 19, 21. And St. Paul ever conſiders

ſiders a drunkard as ſuch a monſter in the chriſtian church, that he has enjoined his firſt converts, even to avoid the company of ſuch, *If any man, who is called a brother, be a*—DRUNKARD;—*I have written unto you, with ſuch a one, no not to eat.* 1 Cor. v. 11.

Theſe are ſome (among a multitude) of the anathemas, which the pure religion of JESUS has aimed at this *worſt* of vices. Would to GOD they might be ever ſounding in the ears of the drunkard; till they brought him to ſobriety, to reaſon, to penitence, to complete repentance and amendment of life!

How odious is the character of an habitual drunkard! Reader, is it yours? If ſo, I call upon you, in this ſolemn interval of ſobriety, at leaſt to ſtop, and conſider. Poor infatuated mortal! If you are in love with everlaſting burnings, if you covet the fierceſt fury of an offended GOD; go on till your ca-

pacious ſtores ſhall fail, till even the divine forbearance ſhall ceaſe; till the flames of GOD's wrath ſhall burſt around you, and you petition, in vain, for a drop of water to cool your tongue! O rather ſtop, and cry mightily unto GOD, to give you reſolution to *break off* this, and all *your* other *ſins by repentance; that ſo* this horrible *iniquity be not your ruin!*

It would by no means be proper, to diſmiſs the ſubject, without adding ſomething to thoſe, who though not habitual drunkards; yet occaſionally, and perhaps frequently, ſuffer themſelves to be overtaken. There is not the ſmalleſt excuſe for you. You know the will of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that you ſhould be *ſober*, and *vigilant*. You know how expreſs the commands of GOD are againſt this vice. You have ſeen how odious it is in his ſight, and have heard the fierce denunciations which he hath pronounced againſt it.

Will

Will you ſay, that it is *habit* which makes it criminal? Where is the man, who is ſo hardy as to aver, that a *ſingle* affront to GOD is a matter of but ſmall conſequence? Would you ſay that one inſtance of fornication, adultery, or murder, is but a trifling offence? Yet the ſpirit of inſpiration hath claſſed drunkenneſs with theſe enormities. No longer then conſider an occaſional, or even a ſingle compliance herewith; as a ſlight, and inconſiderable failing; but rather open your eyes, and behold it in its *true* light; as a deteſtable, and odious vice; a vice, for every ſingle indulgence of which, you ſhall hereafter be called to a dreadful account; and which, if unrepented of, and unforſaken; will as effectually ſink you to the pit of perdition, as all the catalogue of crimes which human conduct can furniſh. O no longer offer the flimſy excuſes which are too frequently ſuggeſted. You bluſh while you offer them. Can there poſſibly exiſt any *ne-*

ceſſity; that for the ſake of earthly buſineſs, you ſhall affront the LORD of heaven, and earth? that to promote your worldly intereſts, and provide the *meat which periſheth*, you ſhall run the hazard of ſecuring to yourſelves everlaſting perdition? Were you ſure that while you are taking the intoxicating draught you ſhould *ſuddenly* have done with the world, and your ſouls be required of you; would you dare to ſwallow the poiſon? No, the full bowl would drop from your hands; and fear, and trembling would take hold upon you. Can company be an excuſe? Will GOD admit it as ſuch? You know he will not. Can you not meet without debaſing your ſouls, and ſinking below your characters as men? Cannot friendſhip, cannot the various refinements of ſocial life, furniſh entertainment, innocent entertainment for the chearful hour? Nay, muſt the conſolations, and glorious proſpects of religion never be admitted to ſweeten the pleaſures of

ſociety?

ſociety? For ſhame! for ſhame! Either give up your diſtinction as chriſtians; and even your rank in the creation as men, and reaſonable beings; or never, from this hour, let intemperance pollute the ſocial entertainment. Perhaps you ſtill reply, that though theſe inſtances do ſometimes happen, yet it is but rarely, and that it is not your *choice*, but owing to the company with whom you happen to meet. What kind of chriſtians are you? What, dare you not aſſert your duty? So far from complying with the guilty taſte of your company? you know, that you ought to *teach* them better conduct. Have you not courage to vindicate the commands of your GOD, and FATHER? Tremble leſt he ſhould hereafter *laugh at your calamity*, and *mock when your fear cometh*. Are you aſhamed of the precepts of your REDEEMER! O repent, or *he will hereafter be aſhamed of you, when he cometh in the clouds of heaven*.

But

But further, neither may you furniſh the *means* of intemperance to others. If you permit your hoſpitality to go beyond the bounds of temperance, and ſuffer others to intoxicate themſelves at your entertainments; you thereby become *partakers* of thoſe mens ſins, and ſtand guilty before GOD. There is not, I ſuppoſe, one among you, who would quietly ſtand by, and ſuffer your friend to commit murder, adultery, or ſuicide, in your preſence. Why then ſhould you ſuffer him to ſtab his own ſoul, and even *furniſh* him with the means of ſo doing? Can you ſuppoſe you can do this, and be innocent? O no, you cannot. It is in vain that you ſay, that your friends without this exceſs, would not conſider themſelves as welcome at your tables; for if you dare to give them this dreadful welcome, you yourſelves run an extreme hazard, of being unwelcome at the banquet above, and even excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

I con-

I conſider this ſubject as of the utmoſt importance. Called as I am, by providence, to cry aloud againſt ſin, and to declare the WHOLE *counſel of GOD.* I dare not *handle the word of GOD deceitfully,* I dare not *call evil, good; and good, evil; put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter;* I dare not ſooth you in your ſins, by leſſening the heinouſneſs of them. I have now delivered my own ſoul, and I truſt I am free from the blood of all men. Before I conclude, I intreat you to conſider what has been delivered, again and again. Weigh it well, and let all that appears convincing, be treaſured up in your hearts. Let it ever riſe to your memory in the ſeaſon of temptation, and then be *faithful* to the dictates it ſhall ſuggeſt. For be aſſured, it will otherwiſe riſe up in judgment againſt you hereafter, when you would give ten thouſand worlds, were they in your power, to avoid the agonies that will be haſtening upon you; and

will

will wiſh, in the bitterneſs of your ſouls, that you had paid a due attention to it.

O GOD, give it thy bleſſing, through JESUS CHRIST!

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Chriſtian LOVE.

John, Chapter xv. Verſe 12.

This is my commandment, that ye LOVE *one another, as I have loved you.*

THE bleſſed JESUS came into this world to inſtruct, and bleſs mankind; as well as to atone for their offences: and to do this, in the higheſt degree, and in thoſe concerns which were of the moſt intereſting nature, was his great object. He who knew *what was in man*, knew how deplorably the human race had departed from original rectitude. He knew that man was created in the likeneſs of GOD, and *GOD is* LOVE. He knew alſo that the ſons of men had ſo corrupted their

ways, that they were become full of every evil temper; that they had drank deep of the ſpirit of the devil; that pride, the ſtrongeſt, plaineſt impreſſion of the infernal nature; had taken full poſſeſſion of them; rankled deeply in their hearts, corrupted their actions, polluted their words, diſtorted their very countenances; and continually branched forth in all the dark characters of hell; that in conſequence hereof, they were *living in malice, and envy; hateful, and hating one another.* He knew how ready, even they who ſhould profeſs to follow him, would be to reſt contented with the outward profeſſion only; and, therefore, he has frequently declared to us *in what* our reſtoration to the likeneſs of GOD muſt conſiſt, and, in many places, has moſt comprehenſively ſummed up the whole of his divine precepts; and that entire change in the mind, which his goſpel requires, as neceſſary to ſalvation; in one important word, LOVE. *Thou ſhalt* LOVE *the*

the LORD, *thy* GOD, *with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind. This is the firſt, and great commandment. And the ſecond is like unto it. Thou ſhalt* LOVE *thy neighbor as thyſelf. On theſe two commandments, hang all the law, and the Prophets.* Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 39, 40. Again, *a new commandment I give unto you, that ye* LOVE *one another, as I have loved you, that ye alſo* LOVE *one another. By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have* LOVE *one to another.* John xiii. 34, 35. And accordingly, the apoſtles, and firſt preachers of the goſpel, continually labor to inculcate the ſame precept. And knowing how much the perverſeneſs of the human heart ſtands in need of *line upon line, and precept upon precept,* to reclaim it, they have ſo continually diſcourſed on this important ſubject, and ſo frequently explained its nature; that it ſtands the MOST CONSPICUOUS INSTRUCTION, in almoſt every page of the New Teſtament. Thus we read,

LOVE *worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore* LOVE *is the fulfilling of the law.* Rom. xiii. 10. *By* LOVE *ſerve one another, for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbor as thy thyſelf.* Gal. v. 13, 14. *The fruit of the ſpirit is* LOVE. Gal. v. 22. *Walk in* LOVE, *as* CHRIST *alſo hath loved us,* Epheſ. v. 2. *The end of the commandment is* LOVE, *out of a pure heart.* 1 Tim. i. 5. *If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the ſcripture; Thou ſhalt* LOVE *thy neighbor as thyſelf, ye do well.* James ii. 8. *See that ye* LOVE *one another, with a pure heart, fervently.* 1 Pet. i. 22. *Let us* LOVE *one another, for love is of GOD, and every one who loveth, is born of GOD,* &c. 1 John iv. 7.

A great variety of other paſſages, to the ſame purport; and equally plain to every capacity, might be quoted; but it is ſcarcely neceſſary in ſo clear a caſe. Yet how ſtrangely have the followers of JESUS forgotten, and neglected this great command; although it is the very

eſſence

eſſence of the religion, which they profeſs to believe, and follow! Though it has ſtood foremoſt, in the ſacred oracles of truth, for near 1800 years; it may, as to the *practical* knowledge, which chriſtians, as they are called, in general, poſſeſs of it, be, even at this day, conſidered as a *new* commandment. Yet all profeſſion of religion is nothing without it. *Though we* could *ſpeak with all the tongues of men, and* the eloquence of *angels,* concerning divine truths; *could underſtand all doctrines,* and harangue ever ſo finely upon religious matters; without this LOVE ruling our hearts, and lives, we are nothing. Our moſt florid diſcourſes, are no better, before GOD, than the *ſounding inſtruments* of braſs, uſed in the worſhip of ſome of the heathen idols, *or tinkling cymbals,* which being two pieces of hollow braſs, and ſtruck together; made a contemptible ſound, with very little variety. *And though we had the gift of prophecy,* of foretelling future events, or of perſuaſive eloquent preaching, *and underſtood all*

all the *myſteries* both of GOD's Word, and Providence; and had *all knowledge* of things divine, and human, which any mortal can attain to. Nay *though* we *have all faith*, are fully convinced, by the ſtrongeſt reſult of our judgments, of *the truth as it is in Jeſus*; or even if we had the primitive power of working miracles; and have not this LOVE, we are nothing. Nay, to ſuppoſe the ſtrongeſt caſe poſſible, *though* we were to *give all our goods*, piece by piece, *to feed the poor*; yea, though we ſhould even deliver up our bodies to be burned, in confirmation of our faith; or rather than we would renounce our religion. Could we do this, from any other motive, and remain deſtitute of LOVE, it would profit us nothing. We ſhould ſtill remain the ſame wretched, unrenewed creatures; alien from the nature of GOD, and conſequently far from true happineſs. Without this LOVE, whatever we ſpeak, whatever we have, whatever we do, whatever we

we ſuffer, whatever we know, is nothing. True religion, therefore, is nothing ſhort of this faith *which worketh by* LOVE, *and is made perfect by* good *works*. Surely then, it is of the utmoſt conſequence, that we ſhould examine ourſelves, whether, and in what degree, we truly poſſeſs this divine principle. In order to this, and to a further, and due, conſideration of our LORD's words, it may be proper. 1ſt, To inveſtigate the nature of this *chriſtian* LOVE, which he has ſo poſitively commanded. *This is my commandment, that ye* LOVE *one another*. And, 2dly, To examine the meaning of the following clauſe, *as I have loved you*.

To inveſtigate the nature of this *chriſtian* LOVE was the firſt thing propoſed. And herein no great labor will be neceſſary. St. Paul has fully, and beautifully deſcribed this heavenly diſpoſition. We need, therefore, only to attend to the plain meaning of what he has

has delivered to us at large on this ſubject. 1 Cor. Chap. xiii.

Our tranſlators have not choſen the beſt word in our language to expreſs the ſenſe of the original, when they rendered ἡ ἀγάπη *charity*, or at leaſt, it is not at *this* time, the fitteſt word to convey the true ſenſe to plain readers. And ſome other parts of the Apoſtles fine deſcription are alſo very unhappily rendered. To correct the whole, and expreſs it exactly the ſame as the original; we muſt take it thus. LOVE *ſuffereth long, and is kind.* LOVE *envieth not.* LOVE *acteth not raſhly; is not puffed up; doth not behave indecently; ſeeketh not her own; is not eaſily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not at iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; covereth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.*

Let us examine each of theſe parts of this amiable character, and conſider how far

far they are generally adopted, by the profeſſors of the goſpel, who acknowledge, that it is the command of JESUS CHRIST, their maſter; that they ſhould *love one another, as he hath loved them.*

LOVE *ſuffereth long, and is kind.* This true love of each other, for CHRIST's ſake, is patient toward all men. It ſuffers all the weakneſs, ignorance, errors, and infirmities of the children of GOD. It was this love which made St. Paul accomodate himſelf, as much as was conſiſtent with a good conſcience, to the different prejudices of mankind; and become *all things to all men, if by any means he might ſave ſome.* Though he knew that meats, and drink, were indifferent things; and that in ſuch matters, *all things were lawful* for him, yet it was this love which conſtrained him to cry out, *I will eat no meat while the world ſtandeth, if I* thereby *cauſe my brother to offend.* The man who poſſeſſes this love, may very

properly, endeavor to remove the ignorance, and rectify the errors, of his brethren; but herein, the only methods he will uſe, are ſolid arguments, and earneſt tender perſuaſion. But this Love bears alſo with the malice, and wickedneſs, of the children of the world; and all this, not only for a time, but to the end. And in every ſtep, toward overcoming evil with good, it *is kind*, ſoft, mild, benign. It inſpires the ſufferer at once with the moſt amiable ſweetneſs, and the moſt fervent, and tender affection. It never requires *an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.* It returns not *railing for railing, or curſing for curſing, but contrariwiſe bleſſing.*

Now is it not a clear caſe, that whereever we turn our eyes, they who profeſs the goſpel of JESUS, have too generally forgotten this part of their character? We ſee the ſame pride of heart promoting contentions; the ſame captiouſneſs of temper, and angry paſſions; and

and too often the ſame bitterneſs, wrath, and even malice; which we obſerve in the world at large; ſwelling the boſoms, poiſoning the tongues, and even corrupting the actions, of them who call themſelves followers of the meek, and lowly Lamb of GOD.

LOVE *envieth not.* Is never diſpleaſed with the ſucceſs, or bleſſings of another; but participates the joy of them who rejoice, and is always ready to—

" *Mix its pitying tear with them who*
" *weep.*"

It can look with a contented, nay even a delighted eye, on the exaltation of others; and is ſo far from deſiring to domineer, and dictate, in the management of concerns which belong equally to others; that it is never found to deviate from the great rule of the apoſtle. *In honor preferring one onother.*

Yet here alſo the followers of JESUS too often forget their character. Fond of power, and vain pre-eminence; how frequently do we ſee them ſtriving for the chief ſeats in the ſynagogue; contentiouſly puſhing themſelves into employments, whilſt modeſt merit is violently thruſt behind; and preſumptuouſly endeavoring to give law to their brethren!

LOVE *acteth not raſhly.* Does not haſtily condemn any one; never paſſes a ſevere ſentence on a ſlight, and ſudden view of things; nor does it ever act in a violent, headſtrong, or precipitate manner. Calm conſideration is its conſtant companion. It judges of things, and circumſtances, *only* by the plain deductions of reaſon; and of men *by their fruits.* And its actions are always well, and maturely weighed; their tendency, and conſequence, throughly pondered; and the whole tempered with that ſweetneſs, and tenderneſs, which muſt be

be the never-failing reſult of ſuch calm conſideration. Conſequently true love never arrogates to itſelf powers which heaven has not beſtowed. To ſtep into the place of GOD, who is *alone* the great LORD of conſcience.—To dictate, and impoſe articles of faith, and deal out anathemas on thoſe who cannot ſee the ſame things in the ſame light; is as contrary to this love, to the nature of GOD, and to the mild example of CHRIST JESUS; as darkneſs is to light. Where then, how far, is this happy godlike temper flown, when perſecution ſtalks, like a deſtroyer, through a land, fills its priſons with innocent ſufferers, and waters the ground with their blood?

Yet theſe are the enormities, which the pretended followers of JESUS have perpetrated, under the ſanction of his moſt holy name. O England! In this *thy* guilt alſo has too flagrantly appeared. *Thou* alſo haſt drank deep of this cup

cup of trembling, and been drunk with the blood of the ſaints. Bear witneſs, ye Smithfield fires, while for ages cruel ignorance, and bigotry, ſpread a dreary ſhade around! During the wicked reigns, of the eighth Henry, of infamous memory, and his ſuperſtitious daughter; and again during the looſe, and abandoned tyranny of Charles the Second, how many thouſands rotted in priſons, pined with famine, and periſhed miſerably; the unhappy victims of corrupt ſtate policy, blind zeal, and narrow bigotry! Where was the commandment of the mild, and beneficent REDEEMER? It was not obliterated from the ſacred page: but it was forgotten; while his pretended followers cruelly deſtroyed each other, and committed all manner of violence, in the name of the LORD. Of all the diſputes which have happened on earth, *religious* diſputes have ever been the moſt bitter, the moſt bloody, the moſt diabolical; and have too frequently written, for

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the view of the whole world, in capital characters, of the deepeſt crimſon, never to be obliterated; that the ſpecious profeſſion of religion, and the *faïr reality*, are, too often, as oppoſite, as the northern, and the ſouthern poles. Thus have men of almoſt every party, when the viciſſitudes which attend all earthly things, have given them power, and placed them uppermoſt; diſcovered the cloven foot, from under the long, and ſhining robe of pretended ſanctity. A ſpecious zeal for the honor of CHRIST, has made them deſtroy thoſe whom He came to *ſave*. The papiſt has not only perſecuted the proteſtant; but the proteſtant, the papiſt. The church-man has been furious againſt the diſſenter, and the diſſenter bitter againſt the church-man; inſomuch that I know of but one ſect, who I believe have never ſhewn any diſpoſition to perſecution. I mean, the Quakers. They have not had it in their power, equally with ſome other ſects; but there have nevertheleſs

theleſs been ſeaſons, and ſituations, wherein they might, and probably would, have ſhewn this corrupt temper; if they had not been influenced by better principles. They profeſs to be the ſons of peace. Their conduct has been conſiſtent with their profeſſion. Whatever people of different ſentiments, may think of them, in other reſpects; it muſt be generally agreed, that this is greatly to their honor, as a *body* of men.

Yet *chriſtian* LOVE levels all diſtinctions. Every man is accountable to GOD *alone*. To his own maſter he muſt ſtand, or fall. He is at full liberty (nay it is his duty, as far as he can) to think, judge, and determine, for himſelf. This general, and rightful liberty, is to be aſſerted, by every man, for himſelf; and allowed, by every man, to others; conſequently, every one is bound to love all thoſe who think differently from him, *as much* as if they adopted every article of his creed.

Conſidering

Conſidering the imperfection of human judgment, the different degrees of intellect, and therefore, the different lights, in which different men are obliged to ſee the ſame thing; it is impoſſible that they ſhould all think alike, upon ſcarce any ſubject whatever. It would be univerſally condemned, as equally ſtrange, abſurd, and cruel, if one man ſhould quarrel with another, and run him through the body, or burn him at a ſtake; becauſe he was ſix inches taller than the other, or of a different complexion. It is juſt as right, and reaſonable, to perſecute him for a different mode of thinking. But may we not let him alone, and avoid him, if he thinks differently from ourſelves? No, not on that account. It is CHRIST's commandment that *ye* LOVE *one another*, EVEN AS HE HAS LOVED YOU. But he holds very erroneous opinions. How know you that? We now *ſee through a glaſs darkly*, and perhaps the error may be, at leaſt partly, on *your*

ſide. And if not, who made you his Judge? Shew me an authority from ſcripture, which empowers you, to paſs a ſevere ſentence of condemnation, upon any opinions which are merely ſpeculative; and I will immediately give up the point. But till then, eſpecially while I read, that we ſhall be judged, according to our *works done in the body;* and that *he who doth righteouſneſs, is righteous;* I muſt ever inſiſt upon it, that they who *do juſtice,* who *love mercy,* and who *walk humbly with their GOD;* who *viſit the fatherleſs, and widows in their affliction; and keep themſelves unſpotted from the world;* are the *real* children of GOD; let their private opinions, or modes of worſhip, be what they may. GOD will ever pardon the involuntary miſtakes of all thoſe who endeavor to ſerve him, according to their beſt judgment, with an *honeſt, and good heart.* The man who miniſters in a ſurplice, and he who preaches in a coat only, may be equally the favorites

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of GOD. They who worſhip the ALMIGHTY, according to the national form of prayer, or they who prefer free devotion, are equally *heirs of ſalvation*, if they ſerve him in their *lives*, and worſhip him *in ſpirit and in truth;* And I am certain, it will never be enquired of us hereafter, at the tribunal of heaven, whether we called ourſelves church-men, or diſſenters; or whether we adhered to this, or that, favorite ſentiment of the times we lived in. But we ſhall certainly be aſked, whether we loved each other *as brethren, with pure hearts, and fervently;* or whether we were continually *falling out by the way;* and contending about *matters of doubtful diſputation, and ſtrifes of words.* I hope I am not miſtaken, and underſtood to mean, that it is no matter of conſequence, what opinions we hold; and that, therefore, we ſhould never form any. I am far from ſuch a ſentiment. It is every man's *duty* to ſearch after *important* truth ſincerely and dili-

gently; (and that alone, I conceive to be important, which has a *religious*, and *moral* influence on his mind) and having thus formed his judgment it is equally his duty, to *hold faſt that which* appears to him to be *good*, unleſs his judgment ſhall, in any inſtance, become fully convinced, that he has been miſtaken. Nor is every mode of worſhip, a matter of indifference, to every man. If you are a church-man, and think your liturgy unexceptionable; you have no occaſion for any other mode of worſhip; but if you are a diſſenter, and ſee defects therein, which render it, in your judgment, unſuitable to the worſhip of GOD; it is not a matter of indifference to *you*, whether you uſe it, or not: On the contrary, it is *your* duty to throw it aſide; becauſe you ought to worſhip GOD in the *beſt* manner you can. This is not, therefore, the matter in hand; but what I contend for is, the neceſſity of cheriſhing a *generous, liberal, affection* toward each other, notwithſtanding

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ing all theſe little differences. And bleſſed be GOD, more light is now diffuſed abroad! The right of private judgment, and the neceſſity of every man thinking for himſelf; is better, and more extenſively underſtood, than formerly; and thoſe deteſtable diſtinctions, which have too long torn, and divided, the affections of the church of CHRIST; are daily giving way. I rejoice in the proſpect. I wiſh to ſee the diſſenter, and the church-man; men of all parties, and opinions; ſhake hands, and cordially *agree to differ;* to conſider each other as *partakers of the ſame hope,* as *heirs of the ſame grace,* as alike the favorites of heaven, while they ſtudy to keep the divine commands; and as equally the children of the ſame beneficent FATHER; in whoſe eye, all the little, narrow, uncharitable diſtinctions, which the policy of ſatan has raiſed, to divide the church of GOD, muſt appear lighter than vanity.

LOVE

LOVE *is not puffed up.* On the contrary, it humbles the ſoul to the duſt. As it teaches us, at all times, to think favorably of others; ſo we are thereby led to think *ſoberly* of ourſelves; becauſe our own faults are better known by us, than thoſe of others can poſſibly be. As it is the nature of pride to breed contention, ſo love, which is the oppoſite to contention, can dwell only with humility. Yet the profeſſors of the goſpel are too often convinced of this ſin, and we ſee nothing more common in religious ſocieties, than for the members thereof, to think *more highly of themſelves, than they ought to think.*

LOVE *doth not behave indecently.* Is not rude, or willingly offenſive to any. *It renders to all their dues*; ſuitably to time, perſon, and other circumſtances. *Honor to whom honor, reverence to whom reverence,* is due; and being tenderly concerned for the welfare of others; it inſpires ſuch an obliging manner,

both

both of acting, and ſpeaking; as ſpreads a moſt amiable ſweetneſs over the whole character; and thereby inſenſibly wins mankind to its ſide. Great indeed are the advantages, which a conſtant attention to this pleaſing demeanor will produce; by melting down the rugged nature of man; but alas! theſe advantages are alſo, by too many, but little regarded; inſomuch that an aukward formality, and ſtiff preciſeneſs; with a ſevere, forbidding, moroſe aſpect, and behavior; too often diſtinguiſh the man of religious character; and a *four headed ſaint* is become a common proverb. Yet this mild ſweetneſs, this engaging ſoftneſs of manners, forms a beautiful part of the character of the Lamb-like JESUS. In this reſpect, as in all others, *he left us his example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps.* And we are bound ſo to do, inaſmuch as hereby our influence among mankind may be greatly encreaſed, and that influence is one of the talents committed

mitted to us; for the uſe, or neglect of which, we ſhall hereafter be called to give an account to GOD.

LOVE *ſeeketh not her own.* Neither eaſe, pleaſure, honor, or temporal advantage, is her *firſt* purſuit. Our *firſt* object of attention ſhould be, to uſe every opportunity, of doing all poſſible good, to the ſouls, or bodies of our brethren. This is one part of the great work which is given us to do, and in this reſpect, the true chriſtian is *fervent in ſpirit,* and continually preſſes forward. Alas! Where ſhall we look for this diſintereſted fervent affection? In how few boſoms does it really reſide? If we look round this *chriſtian* country at large, where is this holy generoſity? Miniſters, and people; the religious, as well as the profligate, are too generally ſcrambling after the poſſeſſions of earth; not with a view to glorify GOD, and benefit their brethren thereby; but with thoſe little, narrow, ſelfiſh motives;

which

which are a flaming diſgrace to the profeſſors of the moſt generous religion ever given to man. Almoſt *all ſeek their own, not the things which are* JESUS CHRIST'S. Alas! even among the miniſters of religion, how few are there, who deſire *to know nothing*, among their people, *but* JESUS CHRIST, *and him crucified!* And among the people, of every religious denomination; how few, who *in ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity, have their converſation in this world;* who are ever tenderly concerned for their brethren, and are willing, on every occaſion, to aim at the good of others! Yet all have the power ſo to do, in ſome reſpect, or other. The pooreſt can benefit his brother, by example; by gentle, mild, reproof; by advice; by comfort; by ſtimulating him forward in the heavenly courſe, and provoking him *to love, and to good works;* finally, by prayer. And we are aſſured that *the fervent prayer of a*

righteous man availeth much. The true lover of mankind may frequently forget himſelf, and his own concerns; while a burning, but prudent zeal for the glory of GOD, and the ſouls of men, abſorps all other conſiderations.

LOVE *is not eaſily provoked.* Though the holy, generous flame, hath kindled the breaſt; and it is as it were on fire, for all theſe great ends; yet the chriſtian, who truly poſſeſſes this happy temper; *is not provoked* to ſharpneſs, or unkindneſs, toward any one. Outward provocations indeed will frequently occur, but he triumphs over all. He ever remembers, that *the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of GOD;* and that the REDEEMER, whom he ſincerely follows; was *meek,* and *lowly, loving unto every man;* that *when he was reviled, he reviled not again,* and *as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth.* He remembers, that

that the ſharpeſt reply, which JESUS CHRIST is recorded to have given; was intended to anſwer the benevolent purpoſe of wholeſome reproof, and was even tempered with mildneſs; and that at laſt, he even prayed for his murderers, *FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* Animated by ſo bright an example, he ever ſtrives to *follow his ſteps.* This is the amiable conduct, of thoſe who truly cultivate this chriſtian temper; but is it that of the profeſſors of religion in general? Do they *keep the door of their lips?* Do they ſuppreſs the *firſt* riſings of anger? Ah me, how deplorable a truth is the contrary aſſertion! What bitter ſtrifes, what fierce animoſities; ſwell, and diſtract the boſoms of contending chriſtians! *The heart of a brother, is turned againſt his brother;* and that of *a friend, againſt his friend.* Surely theſe are the works, and tempers of darkneſs; and their infernal nature may even be known by

the unhappineſs which they bring with them.

But further, LOVE riſes ſtill higher, *it thinketh no evil.* Indeed it cannot but ſee, and hear, evil things; and know that they are ſo: but it does not *willingly* think evil of any, neither *infer* evil where it does not fully appear. It tears up, root and branch, all imagining of what is not confirmed by proof. It caſts out all jealouſies, all evil ſurmiſings, all readineſs to believe evil of our brethren. Calumny, and detraction, are, therefore, its averſion. And here indeed, the profeſſors of religion, and even the faireſt part of GOD's creation; who ſhould be the daughters of peace, gentleneſs, and holineſs; may too generally, hang down their heads in confuſion, and covered with burning bluſhes. It has ever been, and ſtill is, infinitely too much the degenerate cuſtom of the world, to *bite,* and *devour one another;*

another; inſomuch that an ancient heathen could declare, *Homo homini lupus:* The ill-nature of the world is always ready, to put the *worſt* conſtruction upon the actions, words, and even thoughts of their brethren; but ſurely, it is particularly to be lamented; that the tender ſex, in whom we wiſh, and fondly expect to find, every thing which is engaging, and amiable; ſhould too often ſuffer a heedleſs inattention, or a fondneſs for converſation; (for I will not ſuppoſe it to proceed from malignity of heart) to lead them into this moſt unworthy, and corrupt habit. Let not, O let not the tongues which are formed to muſic, and harmony; and the lips which ſhould only breathe forth mild good nature, and captivating ſweetneſs; be polluted with detraction! Slander degrades the fair one, even *below* the beaſts of prey; for the calls of nature impell them; whereas the heedleſs daughter may with her tongue

ſcatter

ſcatter firebrands, arrows, and death; while ſhe cruelly ſays, *am not I in ſport?*

I have the pleaſure of converſing with ſome *few* entire families, where a word of ſcandal is never heard; and the happy conſequence to themſelves is, that, beſides the chearing approbation of the GOD of LOVE; they engage the higheſt eſteem, and conciliate the warmeſt affection of thoſe around them.

LOVE *rejoiceth not at iniquity*, but feels ſorrow for either the ſin, or folly; even of an enemy. It takes no contemptible pleaſure in hearing, or repeating it; but deſires it may be forgiven, and forgotten forever. What has already been ſaid, concerning the conduct of chriſtians in general, includes what might here be obſerved; except that ſome, (alas too many) who profeſs

profeſs the holy name, will negligently ſuffer ſin upon their brethren; and violate their duty both toward GOD, and man; by neglecting, when fair occaſions offer, to point out the faults of their brethren, with *gentle* reproof; and in the *ſpirit of meekneſs*. Hereby they too frequently become *partakers of other mens ſins*.

It is a great, and a difficult thing, thus, in *all* theſe reſpects, to LOVE *indeed, and in truth;* thus to be *faithful followers of the* LAMB. But this *muſt now* be the temper, this *muſt* be the *preſent* conduct, of every one, who ſhall hereafter enter into his glory.

Thus have I gone through all the *negative* parts of this heavenly character. The *poſitive* I intend for future conſideration. And now, my brethren, treaſure up in your minds what has been delivered, meditate upon it, and conſider

conſider it well. Make no invidious applications of it to others, and ſay not that the preacher ſeverely touched ſuch a one, or ſuch a one; but let each wiſely enquire, Did the preacher touch *me?* So ſhall ye learn how far, or in what degree, this *pure law of* LOVE poſſeſſes your boſoms, governs your thoughts, and regulates your words, and actions. So ſhall ye know how far ye have hitherto complied with the poſitive commandment, which JESUS CHRIST has given you; and in obedience to which, for your pattern, and imitation, he has kindly propoſed his own bright example. *This is my commandment, that ye* LOVE *one another,* AS I HAVE LOVED YOU. Whoſo loveth JESUS CHRIST will keep his commandments. This is not a merely ſpeculative enquiry. This is no trifling concern, for ye *muſt* attain, and poſſeſs a holy, loving, conformity to the nature of

of GOD, if ye will enjoy his eternal favor, and be happy in his preſence. BEHOLD THE ALL-SEEING EYE IS UPON YOU! BEHOLD THE JUDGE STANDETH AT THE DOOR!

SERMON X.

Chriſtian LOVE.

John, Chapter xv. Verſe 12.

This is my commandment, that ye LOVE *one another, as I have loved you.*

IN a former diſcourſe upon theſe words, I endeavored to lay before you, the reaſons for which the REDEEMER gave this commandment, viz. becauſe all mankind have corrupted their way, and are gone away backward; far from that amiable likeneſs of the GREAT CREATOR, in which the firſt man was originally created. I endeavored to delineate a ſtrong, but I believe, a juſt picture of mankind, in their preſent natural ſtate; while deſtitute of the all-ſubduing power of true

religion, viz. as living *in malice, and envy; hateful, and hating one another.* And thus, I truſt, I fully evinced the neceſſity of cultivating the contrary temper; even the amiable temper of LOVE; *pure, genuine, unbounded* LOVE; by which alone we can become, in our meaſure, and degree, like unto the GOD who made us; the benign author of every bleſſing. And leſt this important word ſhould be miſunderſtood, as to the *extent* of its ſignification; I undertook to explain the ſeveral properties of this holy temper, as delivered by St. Paul; at the ſame time, examining the characters of the profeſſors of the goſpel in general, by this rule of the apoſtle. You may remember that I went through all the *negative* characters of *chriſtian* LOVE, and while it was enquired, how far chriſtians in general, of every ſort, and denomination, had imbibed the affectionate diſpoſition of the SAVIOR, and obeyed his commandment; the melancholy reſult was, that in moſt, if not all,

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the reſpects examined, they are too frequently found deplorably deficient: That this had ever been the unhappy caſe, in all ages of the church; and that it is too univerſally ſo at preſent. Theſe particulars, I ſay, you may remember, notwithſtanding the intervening cares of the week; as I hope I was ſucceſsfully enabled to convince your judgments, and warm your hearts, I hope that while you made no invidious application of the doctrine to others, the ſcrutiny of your own hearts was beneficial to you; and that the recollection of your own deficiencies, in the various reſpects mentioned; made ſuch an impreſſion as has been ſeen in your conduct ſince. On the contrary, if the commandment of the REDEEMER, was attended to by you, no longer than while you were within the voice of the preacher; that diſcourſe, like thouſands of others; was, as concerning you, delivered in vain. And ſhould this alſo be treated with inattention, you will receive no benefit from

from it, nay it ſhall even become a curſe to you. Every diſcourſe which calls you to conſideration, or repentance; which ſhews you your defects, and directs you in the path of duty; muſt be either an important bleſſing, or a woeful curſe; either a happy opportunity of grace, and ſalvation, or a dreadful enhancement of guilt, and miſery. Thus beſpeaking your attention, as becomes the willing diſciples of JESUS, and the candidates for eternal joys; I proceed in the further proſecution of this important ſubject; to examine, and apply, the *poſitive* properties of chriſtian love.

The laſt *negative* property we conſidered, was LOVE *rejoiceth not at iniquity;* and the apoſtle goes on, *but rejoiceth in the truth.* The true diſciple of JESUS, is ſo far from being indifferent to the ſpiritual intereſts of others; that he is ever tenderly concerned for all mankind, for every individual whom he meets in his walk through life. He

ſees

ſees their ſins with pain, and tender pity; and as he laments over the evil which he beholds in the world, ſo wherever opportunities offer, of obſerving the benign effects of a genuine attention to chriſtianity, in the hearts of mankind, branching out in their tempers, and actions; his ſoul is enlivened, his heart is warmed with heavenly joy. He knows that too generally, the pretended followers of his maſter, content themſelves with ſaying LORD, LORD, and are by no means ſufficiently ſollicitous to *keep his ſayings*. And, therefore, wherever he ſees the transforming energy of the goſpel appear, and bring forth its proper fruit; VIZ. UNFEIGNED HOLINESS OF HEART, AND LIFE; he *rejoices* indeed *in the truth;* rejoices that GOD, his good GOD, is glorified; rejoices that his gracious REDEEMER goes on *conquering, and to conquer;* rejoices, tenderly rejoices like the angels in heaven over

every

every ſinner who repenteth, over every heir of ſalvation.

Behold this glowing picture of divine benevolence ſwelling a human heart! but alas! how few are the living originals! Ah, where are theſe affectionate chriſtians to be found? Let the lukewarm profeſſors of this goſpel of refined generoſity, and love; hang down their heads, reddening with conſcious bluſhes. Let their ſelfiſh hearts ſmite them with wholeſome reproaches, that they may learn that holy vivacity, that generous attention to the beſt intereſts of others, that quick feeling of mutual felicity which their religion is ever ready to inſpire, while it teaches to *rejoice with them, who* of all men upon earth have moſt reaſon to *rejoice*; even they who *obey the truth*.

Love *covereth all things* with a veil of tenderneſs. Whatever evil the true lover

lover of mankind ſees, hears, or knows of any one; he mentions it to none; it never goes out of his lips, unleſs when duty conſtrains him to ſpeak. In this ſenſe we muſt underſtand another text, *Charity*, (or Love) *ſhall cover the multitude of ſins.* 1 Pet. iv. 8. This has too often been miſunderſtood, if not miſrepreſented to ſerve a temporary purpoſe; but the plain meaning is, that it ever conceals what cannot be revealed to advantage; that the perſon who truly poſſeſſes this holy diſpoſition, *keeps the door of his lips*, and *does not ſpeak* raſhly or *unadviſedly with his tongue;* that he ever conſiders himſelf as fallible, and frail; and ever remembers the great law of the REDEEMER, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo unto them*, and that in this reſpect, as in all others; he makes this golden precept his conſtant rule. He knows with what pain, he ſhould find his own faults, or failings; blazoned abroad by the trumpet of fame, or propagated by the

ſecret whiſpers of malevolent ſcandal; and therefore, as he makes all poſſible allowances for others, and as he *rejoices not at iniquity*, the ſeal of ſilence is on his tongue; and he only ſecretly laments over, or privately ſtrives, by rational argument, and affectionate perſuaſion; to cure, or remove what he will by no means publiſh.

Hath any man condemned thee? ſaid the mild, the gracious REDEEMER to the trembling, guilty woman. *No man,* LORD. *Neither do I condemn thee,* GO, AND SIN NO MORE. How few among his followers thus follow their LORD! Alas, how very few, who firſt remove the *beam* from their own eyes; before they preſume to pluck the ſcarce diſcernible ſplinter from their brother's eye! Yet *if any man ſeem to be religious and bridleth not* HIS TONGUE, in this as in all other reſpects, *this man's religion is vain*, it is an empty appearance only without

without the ſubſtance. But LOVE not only *covereth all things*, but likewiſe

Believeth all things. It puts the moſt favorable conſtruction on every thing, is ever ready to allow every extenuating circumſtance, and to believe whatever may tend to the advantage of any ones character. The bitter tongue of ſlander may proclaim the faults, and even magnify the failings of a friend; but *chriſtian* LOVE hears with diſguſt, and ſuſpicion, the malevolent tale; and ever conſiders how vaſtly different circumſtances frequently alter the ſame actions; inſomuch that what under ſome attending circumſtances, ſhall be atrocious evil; may under other circumſtances, become moſt commendable, nay even exalted good. The lover of mankind turns a deaf ear to the inſinuations of malice, and in all caſes, where it is poſſible with any propriety ſo to do, candidly believes the beſt, and moſt favorable conſtruction to be the true

one. And when he can no longer believe well, when evil appears too flagrantly to be denied, then *chriſtian* LOVE *hopeth all things*. It hopes whatever may excuſe, or extenuate the fault, which cannot but be allowed. And indeed numerous pleas may, in a multitude of caſes, be ſuggeſted. How frequently do ſhort-ſighted mortals err, even when they mean to be right? So it muſt ever be, while our underſtandings are thus limited; and our ſpirits confined to theſe priſons of clay. Through the imperfection of our judgments it frequently happens, even in matters of which we have ſome knowledge; that *when we would do good, evil is preſent with us*. Too frequently are we alſo led aſtray *through the ignorance that is in us*. This in many, is invincible; ſince they have not been bleſſed by Providence, with the means of removing it. Here the GOD of MERCY caſts a veil over human defects. He will not require more of us, than our opportunities, and abilities,

abilities, have been equal to; and conſequently the RIGHTEOUS JUDGE is not *extreme to mark what is done amiſs*, and will graciouſly paſs by thoſe tranſgreſſions, in them who *could not* know his will, which in others, he will puniſh *with many ſtripes*. Again human infirmities, fiery temptations, and even turbulent, and powerful paſſions; though attended with guilt in the pure, and perfect eye of GOD; muſt demand ſome candid allowance from us. In all ſuch inſtances, therefore, the true ſpirit of *chriſtian* LOVE will adopt the fine ſentiment of the affectionate REDEEMERS reproof, "*Let him who is without ſin, caſt the firſt ſtone.*" It ſilently turns its view inward on itſelf, feels the full degree of human weakneſs, and in tender ſympathy, hopes the beſt, for a fallen brother; nay even when it cannot at all excuſe, it ſtill hopes that GOD will give *repentance unto life*.

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Is this the general conduct of them who call themſelves chriſtians? Alas then, whence come thoſe evil ſurmiſings, which too frequently burſt out into cruel revilings, bitter taunts, mockings, and invectives; or at leaſt into miſchief-working whiſpers, and dark inſinuations; tending to leſſen even valuable characters, in the opinions of others? Whence that unchriſtian heat, which has ſo frequently divided the followers of JESUS? Whence is it, that we ſo frequently obſerve one man, who ſincerely deſires to *love GOD, and keep his commandments;* ſo cold, and unaffectionate towards another, who perhaps *adorns the doctrine of GOD his* SAVIOR *in all his converſation?* They differ in ſentiment. The latter cannot adopt every article in the creed of the former. For ſhame! This is the only ſcriptural ſchiſm. Not the ſeparating from any external mode of worſhip; but when evil ſurmiſings, and ill-grounded opinions concerning each other, lead the arrogant

arrogant children of men to judge each other *raſhly;* and occaſion them to violate the ties of affection, by which the followers of the ſame SAVIOR, the heirs of the *ſame* grace, ought to be mutually connected; ſo that they no longer preſerve *the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace.*

LOVE *endureth all things;* ſubmits calmly to every trying circumſtance, which can ariſe from the malice, the injuſtice, or the cruelty of men. It enables its happy poſſeſſor not only to *do,* but to *ſuffer all things through* CHRIST *ſtrengthening him.* It waits, with patience, for the full diſcoveries of that tremendous day, which is ſpeedily coming; when, and when *alone*; human characters ſhall be fully laid open; and when *only* a true eſtimate can be formed of them.

Yet how ready are even the children of light, to return evil for ſuppoſed evil;

evil; how eager to form their haſty, and partial judgments of each other; without rendering *honor, where honor is due;* without *eſteeming others better than themſelves.*

The pure, the amiable diſpoſition, which we have thus conſidered; is CHRISTIAN LOVE. This is *the mind which was in* CHRIST. This is that *likeneſs of GOD,* in which we *muſt* be reinſtated, if we hereafter participate the full felicity of heaven, for there no temper but *pure and unmixed* LOVE can be permitted. There the holy affection ſhall flow, in perpetual emanations, from the eternal throne; and communicate indeſcribable happineſs, to all the glorious inhabitants. This indeed is *the end of the commandment.* This is *the fulfilling of the law* of GOD.

The apoſtle proceeds, to give a further, and moſt engaging deſcription of this

this heavenly temper. LOVE *never faileth.* It accompanies us to, and ſhall adorn us in eternity. It prepares us for, and conſtitutes our heaven; for *whether there be prophecies, they ſhall fail,* when all things are fulfilled, and GOD is ALL IN ALL—*whether there be tongues, they ſhall ceaſe.* The gift of ſpeaking divers languages, nay, even the languages themſelves, ſhall ceaſe when all earthly things ſhall be vaniſhed away. One perfect, and harmonious mode of mutual communication, ſhall prevail among all the inhabitants of heaven, when the low and imperfect languages of earth ſhall be forgotten—*whether knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away.* That knowledge which now we ſo eagerly purſue, ſhall be no more. As ſtar-light is loſt in the ſplendor of the meridian ſun, ſo ſhall our preſent imperfect knowledge diſappear, in the clear, and full light of eternity. *And now,* ſaith he, *abideth, Faith, Hope, and Love.* Theſe are the ſum of perfection on earth; *but*

the greateſt of theſe is LOVE. LOVE *alone* is the ſum of perfection in heaven.

As ſo much depends on our attaining, and poſſeſſing, this amiable ſtate of mind; before I proceed, I ſhall endeavor to aſſiſt your recollection, and memory; by briefly recapitulating the ſum of what has been delivered concerning it; both in this, and the former diſcourſe. It appears then clearly, that not only wrath, and bitterneſs; but pride, contention, and captiouſneſs of temper; as well as an undue fondneſs of power, and vain pre-eminence; are inconſiſtent with this pure, and holy diſpoſition; that all perſecution, narrowneſs of judgment, bigotry, furious zeal, and impoſition on the conſciences of men, are as oppoſite to *chriſtian* LOVE as light to darkneſs. Nay that it goes farther, and extends its purifying influence to the thoughts of the heart. LOVE, and humility go hand in hand. The haughty look, the ſupercilious carriage, the arrogance of ſelf-conceit,

conceit, are enemies to LOVE. So alſo is all rudeneſs, ſourneſs, peeviſhneſs, moroſeneſs, every temper which does not ſpread an amiable ſweetneſs over our characters, and conciliate the regards of thoſe around us. *True* LOVE knows no ſelfiſhneſs, or want of generoſity. All ſloth, or negligent ſupineneſs; when we have opportunities of doing good, either to the bodies, or ſouls of men; is contrary to it. So is a readineſs to receive provocations, to return evil for evil, or railing for railing; as alſo all ſlander, detraction, jealouſies, evil ſurmiſings, and readineſs to believe evil; all inhuman mirth at the faults of mankind, and reluctance to giving the wholeſome, mild reproof, when fair occaſions offer. But on the contrary, *true* LOVE mourns over the ſins of others, and rejoices on the converſion of a ſinner. It carefully conceals human infirmities, and faults. It allows every poſſible excuſe, and readily believes, and hopes the beſt. Finally, it bears all things

which GOD ordains; and waits, with patience, without judging raſhly, till the laſt awful day ſhall diſcover all characters.

The bleſſed JESUS accompanies his commandment, with the moſt endearing declaration of his love to us. He gives us this conſideration as a motive to ſoften our rugged minds, and induce us to keep his commandment. He propoſes his own ſhining example for our imitation, to teach us the kind, and degree, of this heavenly temper, which he chuſes ſhould decorate the ſouls, the lives, and the converſation, of his followers; ſhould brighten, and adorn the chriſtian character with trueſt dignity; and diſplay the infinite ſuperiority of our *perfect* diſpenſation, not to all falſe religions only, but to every former diſpenſation of the true. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another,* AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.

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The conſideration of this latter clauſe, is the ſecond ſubject propoſed; and ſurely it contains the ſtrongeſt motive which could be offered. If *GOD hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain ſalvation by* CHRIST JESUS; 1 Theſ. v. 9. *and willeth all men to be ſaved.* 1 Tim. ii. 4. and if CHRIST hath laid down his life *a ranſom for* ALL; 1 Tim. ii. 6. *and taſted death for* EVERY *man:* Heb. ii. 9. If in conſequence of this general grace, and univerſal redemption; every man *may* receive the mercy and grace of GOD, and *come to the knowledge of the truth, as it is in* JESUS. If his ſpirit ſtrives with every man, and he *now commandeth* ALL *men, every where to repent;* Acts xvii. 30. then ſurely, *all* men are *heirs of the ſame grace*, and may be partakers of the ſame glorious ſalvation; brethren not by creation only, but alſo by redemption. And no propoſition has ever been clearer, or more univerſally acknowledged; than that brethren ought to entertain a mutual love and tender regard for each other.

And

And bleſſed be the GOD of LOVE, the ſcriptures of truth declare unto us this comfortable certainty; that *GOD is no reſpecter of perſons;* Acts x. 34. 1 Pet. i. 17. that *he hath no pleaſure in the death of the wicked*; Ezek. xxxiii. 11. but that he is *good to* ALL. Pſ. cxlv. 9. Conſequently every man ought to love all mankind, ſeeing all are beloved by GOD. Could the miſtaken notion of *Auſtin, Calvin,* and ſome others; that GOD has fore-ordained, and certainly doomed, ſome individuals to inevitable deſtruction; and as *veſſels of wrath,* has denied them the benefit of redemption; and even made, and fitted them, as certain fuel, for eternal burnings; I ſay, could this *horrible* doctrine appear at all reconcileable to any idea of goodneſs, and love; or even of juſtice, in the SUPREME BEING; it might be thought, that only a part of the human race, were the objects of our Love. We might think ourſelves at liberty, (nay perhaps might ſuppoſe that we ought)

ought) to hate thoſe whom GOD had hated. Yet even then, I ſee not, how any one could diſtinguiſh between the elect, and the reprobate. But clear as the doctrine of *univerſal* redemption is, it is equally clear, that JESUS CHRIST has made no exceptions, no narrow limitations to our love; but that his commandment *is exceeding broad;* comprehending all, foes as well as friends, ſinners as well as ſaints; becauſe for *all* he hath poured forth his precious blood.

But our LORD hath not only mentioned his love to man, as a powerful motive, to ſtimulate us to the love of each other; but he hath alſo propoſed his example, as a *pattern* for our imitation. Yet wherein can we love our brethren as CHRIST hath loved us? Can we lay down our lives for our friends? No, this is not required; but in our love to each other, we can imitate ſome qualities of the REDEEMER'S

ER's love, which was *fervent*, *diſintereſted*, and *general*.

The SON of GOD loved us with ſo *fervent* an affection, that he quitted *the glory, which he had with the FATHER, before the world was;* and deſcended to earth, with the kindeſt deſigns, for us men, and for our ſalvation. During his miniſtry on earth, he was not ſlothful, or negligent of the great work which he came to perform; but it was to him as his *meat, and drink;* to bleſs, and benefit the bodies, and ſouls of men. He waited not for caſual opportunities to offer, but continually *went about, doing good.* He came to *ſeek*, and to *ſave* mankind, and at laſt even laid down his life, *the juſt, for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to GOD.*

In the *fervency* of his ſpirit, ſurely his followers may, in ſome degree, imitate their maſter. If the *love of* CHRIST *conſtraineth* them, they will not be

ſlothful

ſlothful in this their great buſineſs, but *always abounding in the work of the* LORD. The little, narrow concerns of ſelf, and time; will be all abſorped, in their zeal for the final advantage of their brethren and the glory of GOD.

The REDEEMER's love was *diſintereſted*, as his divine precepts. He came *not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter. Herein is love indeed, not that we firſt loved him, but that he firſt loved us.* He poſſeſſed all poſſible happineſs, in the boſom of the FATHER; and it was by no means in the power of mankind; *wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked* as they were; to bring any acquiſition of felicity to him. It was his ſovereign pleaſure, his generous delight, to confer the greateſt of all bleſſings, where nothing but gratitude could be returned; even free, and unmerited grace, pardon, and ſalvation to the children of men.

In this *diſintereſtedneſs* our love may follow, at a humble diſtance, the foot-ſteps of our glorified head. We certainly are capable, of loving each other, becauſe CHRIST hath commanded it; without any ſelfiſh, or ſiniſter conſideration moving us thereto. This is, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, loving *as brethren, with pure hearts, and fervently.*

But the love of our LORD was alſo *general*, flowing freely, and fully, to *all* who will accept of his amazing bleſſings. Like the benign providence of our heavenly FATHER, who *maketh his ſun to ſhine on the evil, and on the good; and ſendeth rain on the juſt, and on the unjuſt;* even ſo, the ſalutary exertion of his miraculous power, and the pure ſtream of his divine inſtruction, was offered to ALL. *Ho,* EVERY ONE, *who thirſteth,* ſaid the meſſenger who went before him, and predicted the bleſſings of his coming; *come ye, buy wine, and milk, without money, and without price.* And his

his own gracious invitation is, *Come unto me,* ALL *ye who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt.* So alſo, at the concluſion of the laſt awful tragedy, when having been *numbered with the tranſgreſſors,* and *borne the ſins of many;* he ſaid, *It is finiſhed,* and diſmiſſed his ſpirit, then was a *fountain opened for ſin, and for uncleanneſs;* in which ALL who will may *waſh and be clean.*

In the *univerſality,* and *impartiality* of our affection, we alſo may, with cautious, trembling feet, *follow his ſteps;* and though the ſuperlative brightneſs of his example, muſt totally eclipſe our little imitations; yet as it is his command, it is our duty to ſtrive, to become in our meaſure, and degree, like unto him: He himſelf commands us to *love* even *our enemies;* and the precept of his ſervant is, *Let that mind be in you, which was alſo in* CHRIST JESUS.

It appears, therefore, I hope clearly, that the very eſſence of all religion, is LOVE. The pious part is Love toward GOD. The practical part is Love toward Man. Accordingly the Apoſtles all unite in inculcating the ſame commandment. To quote paſſages, in ſo plain a caſe, would be needleſs; ſince it is the general tenor of the New Teſtament, from one end to the other.

Therefore, my brethren, *follow after* LOVE; and let it be ſeen that ye are *indeed* the diſciples of your LORD; by the fervency of your affection toward all mankind, more eſpecially toward *the houſhold of faith;* i. e. toward *all* of every denomination, or creed, who *love our* LORD JESUS *in ſincerity*, and ſtrive to *keep his ſayings*. It is a different kind of love, which ye owe to the two different deſcriptions of men; ſinners, and ſaints; but it may be equally *fervent*, and active; equally *diſintereſted*, and equally *general*. The love which ye owe

owe to the ſinners of the world, your brethren of mankind at large; is full of pity, and tenderneſs; and produces an earneſt deſire *that they may be ſaved.* The love which ye owe to your brethren in the goſpel, (i. e. the truly religious of every denomination) may be more mixed with joy, and will lead ye to *build each other up*, and to *provoke each other to* further *love, and to good works.* O be careful, that *ye fall not out by the way. Sirs, ye are brethren* in the calling, and hope of the goſpel. What if different modes of worſhip divide your external aſſembling on earth, what if different ſentiments make you, in theſe little reſpects, to vary from each other? Ye may ſtill be *equally* the ſervants, and favorites of the ſame GOD, with whom *neither circumciſion is any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but a* NEW CREATURE; who looks not at theſe little differences, which have ariſen ſolely from the *imperfection* of human judgment; but at *the heart*; and who, where he findeth *that* ſincere

ſincere, accepteth the perſon. No more let the diſſenter be bigotted againſt the church-man, or the church-man againſt the diſſenter. No more let the device of Satan be ſucceſsful, in leading ye to anathematize thoſe, whoſe creed is different from yours. If ye are tempted thereto, draw back from the evil, and ſay; *how ſhall I curſe, whom the LORD hath not curſed; how ſhall I defy, whom the LORD hath hot defied?* O watch over the motions of your hearts in all theſe reſpects. *Put away from ye, as becometh ſaints, all bitterneſs, wrath, malice,* envy, contention, evil ſpeaking, and evil thinking; and O *put ye on bowels of compaſſion, forbearing one another in love;* being tender, courteous, placable, and mild; and let that holy generoſity, that celeſtial benevolence, which only cometh down from the FATHER OF MERCIES, teach ye to adopt in *practice* the fine ſentiment of the Poet's petition to heaven—

Let

Let not this weak unknowing hand
Preſume thy bolts to throw!
Or deal damnation round the land,
On each I judge thy foe!

Teach me to feel anothers woe!
To hide the fault I ſee!
That mercy I to others ſhew,
That mercy ſhew to me!

Thus ſhall ye go on till ye are *rooted, and grounded in love;* till ye riſe into all the likeneſs of CHRIST your head; till ye become *capable* of enjoying the felicity, which he hath prepared for ye. Then ſhall ye leave this frail mortality behind, and as heirs of glory, ſhall take your places round the eternal throne. There ſhall ye join with the cherubim, and ſeraphim, and all the hoſt of heaven, in ſtrains of extacy, and praiſe, *which it is not poſſible* now *for man to utter.* Ye ſhall ſweep your golden lyres, and ſwell the full anthem through the courts above; to celebrate that LOVE

which

which was *ſtronger than death;* even that of THE LAMB *who was ſlain, who hath redeemed* his church *to GOD by his blood; out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* To Him, therefore, as the head of his church, the LOVER, and FRIEND of mankind; the UNIVERSAL SAVIOR; let us joyfully aſcribe *bleſſing, and honor, and glory, and power,* for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

The GOODNESS of GOD,

Being a New-Year Diſcourſe delivered at FORDINGBRIDGE, January 15, 1786, at the Monthly Evening Lecture.

Pſalm lxv, Verſe 11.

Thou crowneſt the Year with thy GOODNESS.

THE goodneſs of GOD is a ſubject, on which we cannot contemplate too frequently, or too much; and it is a copious ſubject; for when we have examined it to the utmoſt, that our little faculties will permit; we muſt ſay,

Lo, theſe are but *a part of his ways, yet how little a portion is known of him!*

There is a beauty in theſe words, which well deſerves obſervation. As a *King* ſtands diſtinguiſhed amidſt his ſubjects, as the *Crown* amidſt leſs ornaments; ſo he finely repreſents the GOODNESS of GOD, as foremoſt, and moſt conſpicuous, among all his attributes. *Thou crowneſt the year with thy* GOODNESS.

This is indeed a ſweet, and a glorious ſubject of conſideration; and, as I have already obſerved, cannot engage our attention too much, or too often; but there is a *peculiar* propriety, in conſidering it more at large, when *recent* experience has convinced us of its truth; when we have been led *ſafely*, and in a great degree *happily*; through another ſet of revolving ſeaſons; and have again entered on a new period of divine mercy.

The

The GOODNESS of the DEITY, is in nothing more viſible; than in his wiſe, and beneficent ſuperintendence of all the works which he has made. He is the CREATOR of all things, and he made them *good*. He formed his *rational offspring* for happineſs; but if he had left them here, if his care did not continually protect, what his goodneſs has brought into being; who can ſay what confuſion, what ruin muſt enſue? Could the ſyſtems which he has made, each know their proper bounds? Could this earth, and planets; keep in their proper tracks, and perform their ſeveral regular revolutions without his impelling, and directing hand? Surely no. It is He who controlls their motions, who marks out, and directs their ſeveral courſes, through the immenſe tracks of ſpace; who *bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his ſeaſon, and guideth Arcturus with his ſons;* who hath appointed, and preſerves all *the ordinances of heaven.* It is He who hath conducted our earth

through another revolution, and hath again favored us with the uſual ſucceſſion of ſeaſons. *He* not only *maketh the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice;* in the pleaſing, and needful change of day, and night; but his care, and love, (or goodneſs, call it which you will) extend through the various months; and the ſeaſons which he hath ordained, have again, in abundant exuberance, poured their ſtore of bleſſings upon us.

At his command, the *Spring* advanced clad in heart-reviving ſmiles, and dreſſed in gayeſt charms. The numerous beauties, with which He hath ſo liberally beſtrewed our way, put forth their engaging forms. Soft, and balmy breathed the air. Joy inſpired every boſom, and lighted up every countenance. We received the welcome viſitant with gladneſs, and enjoyed the gracious boon of heaven.

The

The ſober *Summer* next appeared, and gave us the pleaſing proſpect of a full ſupply for all our wants. We enjoyed the delights of the happy ſeaſon, and rejoiced under its mild domain. The *chilling blaſt*, and the *parching heat* were averted*. *He viſited the earth, and watered it. He greatly enriched it. He prepared us corn, when he had ſo provided for it. He watered the ridges thereof abundantly, He ſettled the furrows thereof: He made it ſoft with ſhowers. He bleſſed the ſpringing thereof. His paths dropped fatneſs. They dropped upon the paſtures, and the little hills rejoiced, on every ſide. The paſtures were clothed with flocks. The vallies alſo were covered over with corn.*

* The latter part of the ſpring of 1785, was remarkable for *chilling, blighting winds*, which were ſucceeded by *great heat*, and *long drought*; inſomuch that the Farmers near Fordingbridge, and the neighboring towns; predicted a moſt dreadful deficiency of their crops; but the GREAT GOVERNOR of nature, diſperſed the gloom, and removed the general apprehenſion; by a pleaſing change of weather.

Led

Led by his foſtering hand, the *Autumn* came; and lo! *Our barns were filled with plenty.* The earth, in copious abundance, poured forth its ineſtimable treaſures; treaſures which were the gifts of a *GOD*, and worthy of a *GOD* to beſtow. The earth hath again produced its various fruits *in due ſeaſon;* corn, wine, and oil, with every rich ſupply, for the uſe of *man*, who *ſhall not live by bread alone.* His beneficent bleſſing hath again been upon us, and rendered this favored iſland, as *the garden of GOD*, as *a land flowing with milk, and honey.*

He hath led forward the *Winter*, the ſeaſon of ſocial enjoyment; wherein we may feaſt on his bounty, and ſtill his bleſſing attends us.

Through the varying ſeaſons, He hath preſerved us from general diſeaſes, and public calamities. We have paſſed on ſecure from *the arrow that flieth at noonday, and the peſtilence that walketh in darkneſs;*

neſs; and no plague hath come nigh our dwellings. We have ſtill been favored with our civil, and religious advantages; we eat of the labor of our own hands, and worſhip GOD according to our conſciences. He hath brought us to a happy concluſion of the year, and hath *crowned the year with his goodneſs.* What then, my brethren, ought to be our ſentiments, when we conſider theſe his general bleſſings; but ſentiments of gratitude? Surely ye cannot ſurvey the benign conduct of the GREAT BENEFACTOR with cold, and unmoved affections. Shall the MOST HIGH, who is exalted above all conception, be thus gracious to us, and bleſs us, and *cauſe his face to ſhine upon us;* and ſhall we not return him even our feeble tribute of thanks? O rather let us *break forth before him into ſinging, let us come before his preſence with thankſgiving;* for we are *the people of his paſture, and the ſheep of his hand. The LORD reigneth, let the multitude of the iſles be glad thereof.* Bleſ-

ſed

ſed be the LORD, who daily loadeth us with benefits. *Let the people praiſe thee, O GOD, let all the people praiſe thee.*

Theſe are his *general* mercies; but his *particular* bleſſings have been alſo conferred upon us, as individuals; and they alſo have been *great* and *gracious;* they alſo muſt convince us that *his tender mercies are over all his works,* and that *his mercy endureth for ever.* Let us briefly ſurvey them.

He who is the great arbiter of life, and death; *the GOD of our lives, and the length of our days;* hath extended his particular favor to us, and continued our exiſtence. It is certain, that *in* HIM *we live, and move, and have our being.* Through his kindneſs, therefore, muſt it be, that we have our period of probation lengthened out unto us; and continued as an opportunity of repentance; and we now indeed appear before him, the

the monuments of his mercy, and goodneſs; as well as his power.

Caſt your view backward, and give ſcope to the ſalutary reflection. Since the laſt year opened upon you, how many have you ſeen drop into *the duſt of the earth*, even ſome of your companions, and friends! Their enjoyments have been cut off, their opportunities are paſſed away, and they themſelves, are ſunk into thoſe regions, where all things are forgotten for a time, till they ſhall be ſummoned to meet their judge, and receive their eternal doom. And while theſe have been called away, have you been preſerved from the ſhades of death? Do you now appear as *the living before him?* then ſurely, you come gladly *to ſhew forth his praiſe.* Cry aloud unto GOD, *laud and magnify his holy name*, and acknowledge, that in this reſpect alſo, he hath *crowned the year with his goodneſs.*

Some of you have, perhaps, been brought down to the borders of the grave. It hath pleaſed the FATHER of your ſpirits, to hold you over the pit of mortality; and to bring you to thoſe trying circumſtances, in which your helpleſs friends ſtood weeping around you, incapable of affording you any aſſiſtance; when, according to all human appearance, you were about to take a laſt, and long farewell, of every preſent delight. The tender endearments of conjugal love, the refined pleaſures of ſocial affection, your friends, your parents, the dear partners of your joys and ſorrows, the engaging pledges of your love, all ſeemed to be ſeparating from you. O with what regret did you look back on paſt delights! delights ſweetened by innocence, and approved by heaven!—perhaps your ſpirits were reſigned, but amid your reſignation, human infirmity mixed a degree of reluctance—

For who, to dumb forgetfulneſs a prey,
This pleaſing, anxious being, e'er reſign'd;
Left the warm precincts of the chearful day,
Nor caſt ONE *longing, ling'ring look behind?*

In the bitterneſs of your ſouls, ye cried to the LORD. He heard your petition, and ſhewed you, that it is HE indeed, who is *ſtrong to deliver;* who ſheweth mercy; *who killeth, and maketh alive;* who *bringeth down to the grave, and* who *lifteth up from the gates of death.* Ye have been reſtored to life, to health, to comfort, to your families, to your friends, to the full enjoyment of all your former bleſſings.

Let the ſofter ſex remember the agonizing hours, through which the preſerving providence of GOD hath ſafely conducted them; when *pangs, and ſorrow took hold upon them.* In the hour of natures extreme diſtreſs, *His* hand hath ſupported them, hath kept their hover-

ing ſpirits from quitting the frail manſion of clay; hath *upheld them in life*, and commanded that *though anguiſh might endure for a night, joy ſhould come in the morning*. They have been made happy, and joyful mothers; raiſed to their former health, and activity; and entruſted with the honorable and delightful charge of rearing, and training the young candidates for immortality, and heaven.

What inſtances of divine goodneſs could be ſuperior to theſe? And ſhall your tongues be ſilent before him? Shall not your tongues, and hearts offer to him the ſong of gratitude? *Sing unto the LORD, O ye ſaints of his, give thanks at the remembrance of his loving kindneſs! He hath turned your mourning into dancing, to the end that your glory may ſing praiſe to him, and not be ſilent. Bleſſed be the LORD, for he hath ſhewed ye his marvellous kindneſs! O give thanks unto*

GOD

GOD for ever! ſing praiſes unto him, while ye have your being!

But beſide his mercy, in lengthening out our lives; he alſo hath preſerved us, from innumerable evils, to which we might otherwiſe have been expoſed. He hath alſo continued unto us the uſe and benefits of thoſe faculties, which are the *honor* of our nature, and its *higheſt* diſtinction. Behold the unhappy wanderer, whoſe mind is depraved to *lunacy!* View the ſtraw-crowned monarch, muttering his wayward fancies! With eyes rivetted to the ground, with a countenance pale, emaciated, and ſolemn as the grave; with the fixed aſpect of deep dejection, and confirmed deſpair; ſee the ſad victim of *moaping melancholy!*—O the dire din of chains! the horrors of *raging* madneſs!—And ſometimes, alas! the finely cultivated mind, which has been accuſtomed to the nobleſt ſpeculations, and moſt abſtracted reaſonings; which has delighted the wondering

wondering world, with the moſt brilliant, and admired productions; has ſunk even below the level of infantine folly. The ſplendid ſun hath gone down at noon, and ſet in the thick clouds of *idiotiſm.* Alas! how deplorable are theſe wrecks of human nature! How terrible theſe calamities! How infinitely more ſhocking, to our apprehenſions, than death itſelf!

And have we been preſerved from theſe moſt dreadful evils? Have we ſtill been honored with the uſe, and advantages of our rational faculties? O *let us offer unto GOD thankſgiving, and glorify Him!* Let us give glory to the LORD, our GOD; *that he hath not cauſed darkneſs!*

GOD hath protected us from innumerable other evils. We know that we are ſurrounded with dangers, and walk amidſt ſnares; but we have paſſed on ſecure, even in the midſt of them, to the

the commencement of another year; for *the LORD ſuſtained us. Thoſe watchful eyes which neither ſlumber, nor ſleep* were continually upon us. *He watched over us for good,* and encircled us with a divine ſecurity. *He hath been our light, and our ſalvation; whom ſhall we fear? The LORD hath been the ſtrength of our life, of whom ſhall we be afraid?* To HIM let us render our thanks, and ſay, in the ſwelling joy of our hearts: *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory!*

GOD hath continued unto us numerous comforts, which we have richly enjoyed. Look back, my brethren, on the events of the year; and can ye not plainly diſcover the hand of heaven, diſpenſing bleſſings unto ye?—conducting your ſeveral affairs?—interpoſing in your behalf?—and ſweetly overruling all things for good? If ye are ſenſible of this—

Ten thouſand, thouſand, precious gifts,
Your daily thanks employ;
Nor is the leaſt the chearful hearts
Which taſte thoſe gifts with joy.

Obſerve alſo, as changing circumſtances required, how exactly the LORD hath ſuited your abilities, to that which his providence required of ye. Difficulties, and fatigues, which ye have formerly been unable to bear; he hath, perhaps, ſeen fit, in his wiſdom, to lay upon ye; and therefore, he hath encreaſed your ſtrength, and ſuited your powers to your reſpective ſituations. Nor has he ſuffered ye to be tempted above that ye were able to bear. Nay, in how many inſtances has he kindly, and graciouſly removed the occaſions of evil from ye?—

Through hidden dangers, toils, and death;
He gently clear'd your way;
And through the pleaſing ſnares of vice,
More to be fear'd than they.

O that

O that men would praiſe the LORD, for his goodneſs, and for his marvellous loving-kindneſs to the children of men! Let us bleſs the LORD at all times! Let his praiſe be continually in our mouths, for we have taſted, and ſeen, that the LORD is gracious!

Still to enhance his goodneſs towards us, to give us a keener reliſh for his earthly bleſſings; He hath made us *ſocial* creatures. Our happineſs here cannot reſult from ourſelves; but we are taught to expect it, in a double portion, from the tenderneſs of relatives, and the endearments of friendſhip, and ſocial affection. Has the *univerſal* BENEFACTOR continued the lives, and happy circumſtances of thoſe we love? O what reaſon have we, for this alſo, to praiſe his name! He hath herein, continued to us, a ſource of the moſt exquiſite, moſt refined delight; and the heart which enjoys the ſentimental feaſt of conjugal love; or feels the ſtrong, and

ſweet attachments of affinity; and the ſympathetic glow of friendſhip; muſt ever be wakened, by this reflection, to the moſt lively gratitude. *Young men, and Maidens; Old men, and Children; praiſe ye the LORD.*

Amidſt his multitude of mercies, be it alſo remembered, that the HIGH and HOLY ONE hath borne with our repeated tranſgreſſions, our perverſeneſs, our unfruitfulneſs. There are thoſe among ye, who have frequently offended him, by ſuch actions as ye *knew* were *evil in his ſight.* Year after year has been conſumed in ſin; nor has even the laſt been better improved; but ye have perſiſted, in indulging the corrupt imaginations of your hearts. All former warnings have been diſregarded, and ye have ſtill remained the dupes of *intoxication*, or *uncleanneſs;* the ſlaves of ſenſe and ſin. There are, I fear, alſo too many of thoſe who, notwithſtanding the faireſt regular profeſſion, are

but

but *negligent hearers* of the word and *not doers* thereof; who inſtead of *abounding in the work of the LORD*, remain *totally unfruitful*. Look into yourſelves, and ye may well ſtand aſtoniſhed, at the long-ſuffering, and loving-kindneſs of the LORD; that to you alſo, he ſhould continue his abundant mercies, and *crown the year with his goodneſs*. You affront the HOLY ONE to his face, yet ſtill he hath borne with your provocations. You have neglected the glorious opportunity his patience beſtowed. Your ſins have cried aloud for vengeance—

"Yet did he ſtill in mercy ſpare,
And lengthened out another year".

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praiſed; for he is *long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs;—keeping mercy for thouſands. From the riſing of the ſun, unto the going down of the ſame; the LORD's name is to be praiſed.*

Surely, by this time, it abundantly appears, that GOD hath indeed *crowned the year with his goodneſs.* He hath diſplayed his love, in all theſe inſtances, towards us; and hath brought us ſafely to the concluſion of the paſt year, and the commencement of another;—of another, which I could wiſh might be ſpent, more to his glory; and our own benefit. Men, Brethren, and Fathers, conſider, in ſoberneſs of ſoul, what are the leſſons, which the *goodneſs* of GOD ſhould teach us. You undoubtedly ſee the *fitneſs* of rendering to him the returns which he deſires. You undoubtedly ſee the *advantage* hereof.

Merely praiſing his name with our lips *only,* is not ſufficient. Theſe conſiderations ſhould have a *moral* influence upon us; and ſtill more particularly, thoſe which relate to us as individuals,

If

If he hath, in mercy, continued our lives; O let us remember for *what* end, they have been lengthened out unto us. Surely that we may *break off our ſins by repentance. He deſires not the death of a ſinner*, and therefore, he extends his long-ſuffering mercy to us. O requite not his wonderful love with impious neglect! Let not the young, and gay, preſume on life's lengthened ſpan; for youth, beauty, manhood, female grace, with every gay attraction, are frequently *cut down like a flower, and flee as it were a ſhadow;* and if not ſo, how ſoon ſhall the poor tale of vanity be paſt! What is our life at longeſt? *A tale that is told,*—a ſhuttle in the loom,—*A ſleep in the morning,*—a river ſoftly haſting to the ocean.

Life glides away, Lorenzo, like a ſtream,
Forever changing; unperceived the change.
In the ſame ſtream none ever bath'd him
twice,
To the ſame life none ever twice awoke.
We call the ſtream the ſame. The ſame we
think

Our

Our life, though ſtill more rapid in its flow;
Nor mark the much irrevocably laps'd,
And mingled with the ſea.——

Let maturer age, the ſober children of reflection,; deſpiſe the circles of earthly folly! Let them adopt a wiſdom conſiſtent with the full meridian of underſtanding! Let them purſue, and ſecure that *greateſt* of all advantages; *the favor of GOD!* ſo ſhall they anſwer the true end of their being, and fulfil the benevolent deſign of the *GREAT CREATOR*, and *PRESERVER of men.*

Is there a *hoary* trifler, who can look with indifference on the ſhort period that remains? Brand that man's character with madneſs! Folly is much too mild a term. What, has the circling ſun beheld you, through three-ſcore revolutions ſtill the ſame? Have you borne the name of JESUS from your infancy, and have you not yet departed from iniquity?

iniquity? Do you totter over the opening grave, and will you ſtill graſp at the vanities of earth? Nay, but you are hanging by a *ſingle* thread, and that over the pit of deſtruction. Will you ſtill trifle with everlaſting burnings, with the vengeance of that GOD, whoſe patient forbearance you have ſo long abuſed?—who hath come, year after year; *ſeeking fruit*, but has found *none?* Alas! Unleſs you inſtantly ſeize the *few* remaining moments, you are *loſt for ever*. In all probability, another year may never dawn upon you. O ſnatch the departing opportunity!

The continuance of our lives is not the only motive, that ſhould lead us to gratitude, and to *ſerve the* LORD *with gladneſs*. Every inſtance of his goodneſs mentioned, muſt furniſh an additional obligation. What ſober inſtruction reſults from conſidering that the FATHER of MERCIES hath continued to us the uſe of our rational faculties;

culties; but that thoſe faculties ſhould be devoted to his ſervice, and ever employed, under his bleſſing, in advancing the perfection of our nature? Let not our Reaſon, or mental advantages be perverted, to the depraving ourſelves, or others. Let Reaſon, ſupported by Religion, and conducted by the ſure *light of GOD's countenance*, the aid of his grace; maintain its proper ſuperiority, and keep our corrupt paſſions from all undue aſcendancy. Let the powers of our minds be improved, in promoting the glory of GOD, and the advantage of each other! O let us tremble to prophane them, leſt the invaluable, but ſlighted talent ſhould be taken from us; and the juſt judgment of the MOST HIGH ſhould debaſe our minds to idiotiſm, or pervert them to madneſs!

Hath the LORD protected us from innumerable other evils? O let us truſt in him fully! He is our ſhepherd. If we

we *hear his voice, though we walk through the dreary valley of the ſhadow of death* we need to fear *no evil.*

" *His friendly crook ſhall give us aid,*
And guide us through the dreadful ſhade."

Does his bounty continue unto us his numerous comforts? Do we participate a multitude of his good gifts! Let us receive them *with thankfulneſs, and richly enjoy them;* but *let our moderation be known unto all men!* My brethren, I hope this ſeaſon of cuſtomary feſtivity has been a ſeaſon of innocence. I hope ye have not celebrated the birth of your REDEEMER with intemperance, and the works of darkneſs. I hope there has been no drunkenneſs, no gluttony, no guilty revelling, no quarrelling among you; but that you have conducted your entertainments with *chriſtian* prudence. And ſurely no one can think of acknowledging GOD's goodneſs through the paſt year, by violating his commands, at the

commencement of the new one. I hope as GOD hath ſo liberally poured bleſſings upon you, that ye have gladly remembered your *indigent* brethren, and that they alſo have partaken of your feſtivity; that ye have been, as far as ye were able; ready, and willing, to *communicate* to their neceſſities. And that *the bleſſing of them, who were ready to periſh*, has added a reliſh to your enjoyments.

Would ye imitate the SOVEREIGN AUTHOR of all good; let his forgiveneſs, teach you alſo to *forgive* your brethren. Let his patient forbearance teach you alſo the ſame holy temper, to bear with their tranſgreſſions; to have pity upon them; *even as GOD hath had pity on you.*

Due conſideration only is wanting, or the goodneſs of GOD muſt *lead us to repentance.* O give that conſideration full place in your minds. It will ſhew ye

ye the *fitneſs* of loving him, who loves you with ſo wonderful a love. It will exhibit before ye, in the moſt captivating, and glowing colors; the *beauty of holineſs*. It will bring ye to JESUS, *the author, and finiſher of your faith;* and enable ye to amend your lives. Conſider your own ſituation; conſider the *goodneſs* of GOD; and learn to walk with all holy circumſpection, *having your loins girded, and your lamps burning;* for *ye know not what a year*, or even *a day may bring forth.*

The infant year has opened upon ye. Affection ſuggeſts the uſual wiſh, that it may prove *happy* to each individual. It is the will of GOD that it ſhould be ſo; but it is in *your own choice* alone. Conſecrate it to *Him*, and happineſs muſt attend ye: Continue it (like the paſt) in ſin, and folly; and miſery, bitter miſery ſhall be your doom here; if not *weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth* hereafter.

But *if ye are willing, and obedient; redeeming the time;* the LORD ſhall *lift up the light of his countenance upon ye,* and ſhall *give ye peace,* and every bleſſing; for *no good thing will he withold, from them who walk uprightly.* He ſhall crown your every year with *his goodneſs,* and ſhall at length tranſlate ye, through the mediation of JESUS CHRIST; to thoſe happy realms, where no changes ſhall proceed from revolving ſeaſons; but one eternal ſpring ſhall ſecure to every happy inhabitant, the ineffable delights which are *at GOD's right hand.* Conſider well what has been delivered, and may he give you a right underſtanding, in all things neceſſary to ſalvation, by JESUS CHRIST! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

Our LORD's Caution to the Hearers of his Word explained, and applied.

Luke, Chapter 8, Verſe 18.

Take heed—how ye hear.

WE are ſaved by faith, ſays the ſacred writer. i. e Faith, or a full belief of divine truths; is that which induces us to pay a proper attention to them, and to cultivate that obedience, which is the condition of our ſalvation. And this faith comes by *hearing*. *Hearing* is the way, by which the will of GOD is made known to man, and we become

become capable of believing his revelation to us. Well, therefore, might the REDEEMER give this important caution!

Our LORD had been preaching to the multitude, in a plain, and familiar parable; in which he had fully diſplayed the various deſcriptions of perſons who followed his miniſtry. And alas, in that deſcription, he has too plainly drawn the characters, of thoſe who call themſelves by his name; in every ſucceeding age, and in every nation.

A ſower went out to ſow his ſeed, *and as he ſowed, ſome fell by the way ſide; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.* Theſe, ſays the REDEEMER, in the following explanation of the parable; are they who hear with ſo much negligence, and inattention; that not the leaſt impreſſion is made upon them. The divine doctrine is heard by them, with as little regard, as the murmuring

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of the wind, or the babbling of the ſtream; ſo that *the devil cometh, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, leſt they ſhould believe, and be ſaved.* The ſeed is even *trodden down.* A fine thought to expreſs the contempt with which it is treated! Things which we tread under our feet, are accounted ſo vile, as not to be worthy to be taken up from the ground.

And ſome fell upon a rock, and as ſoon as it was ſprung up, it withered away; becauſe it lacked moiſture. Theſe are they, who when they hear, receive the word with joy; and theſe have no root, being perſons who *but for a time believe, but in time of temptation fall away.* Here is no fitneſs in the ſoil, for the good ſeed to ſprout; much leſs to bring forth fruit unto perfection. Such is the human heart in its native hardneſs. Till, by due conſideration; it is rendered tender, and ſuſceptible of divine impreſſions; it is an impenetrable rock. Till we have ſeen

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the folly of purſuing the deceitful vanities of life,—Till the deluſions of the world have loſt their faſcinating power; the heart of man is as a rock, even harder than the nether mill-ſtone: And it might as properly be expected, that the foodful grain ſhould ſpring up, and advance to a joyful harveſt; when ſcattered in the marble quarry, or on the bed of burning gravel; as that the wholeſome inſtructions of divine wiſdom, ſhould take root, grow, and flouriſh in ſuch a heart. This kind of hearers may *receive the word with joy*, may liſten to it as a fine well-told tale, may admire it in ſpeculation, may believe its doctrines; and as they make open profeſſion of it, nothing is more eaſy, than even to recommend its precepts to the obſervance of *others;* but theſe having *no root in themſelves*,—no well-ſettled principle of love to GOD, and ſincere obedience; *in time of temptation fall away*. We may underſtand this expreſſion to relate to either their *private*,

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or *public* conduct. If to their *private* conduct, I apprehend it ſignifies, that when ſtrong temptations attend them from without, and they are powerfully inclined, by corrupt nature, to indulge themſelves in ſome wicked compliance; the divine leſſons of inſtruction which they have ſo often heard, and even *recommended to others*, loſe their power; they quietly ſubmit to the ſolicitations of ſin, and fall away from that purity which they have profeſſed to follow. But it may be moſt probable, that our LORD's more immediate meaning, related to their *public* conduct; and ſignified that they would have *no boldneſs*, to aſſert the honor of the cauſe which they have approved; but *when perſecution*, or any uncomfortable circumſtances aroſe, *becauſe of the word* they would *immediately be offended.* Theſe are the *ſoft*, and *ſilken* chriſtians; who willingly follow the REDEEMER, ſo far as faſhion leads the way; and while their path is decked with flowers, and

the gaiety of ſun-ſhine ſmiles around; but change the ſcene,—let worldly advantage and popular applauſe point a contrary courſe,—let the ways become rugged, and uneven below; and the ſcowling clouds threaten from above; and their flimſy attachment to the REDEEMER, and the cauſe of truth; will ſpeedily appear to be like *the friendſhips of the world*;—they will all *forſake* him, and *flee*.

And ſome fell among thorns, and the thorns ſprang up with it, and overgrowing it, *choked it. Theſe are they, who when they have heard the word, go forth* into the world, *one to his farm, and another to his merchandize; and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleaſures of this life; and bring no fruit unto perfection.* Here is moſt beautifully expreſſed, the gradation of evil. Firſt *anxious cares*. Theſe are frequently ſucceeded by *riches*, the ſecond ſtep towards deſtruction; for unſanctified riches are the *worſt* of curſes; inaſmuch as they can procure all the evil pleaſures

pleaſures of this life. Here is the third and moſt dangerous degree of evil. Hereby the poſſeſſors of riches are brought into a *ſnare;* even *many fooliſh, and hurtful luſts.*—Theſe too often *drown men in perdition;* by ſtaining their ſouls with guilt, and leaving them but little inclination, and few opportunities, for that *ſober reflection,* which would bring them back to the path of happineſs. Thus riches, (eagerly as they are deſired) are indeed thorns.—Too often concealed thorns. We catch at a ſuppoſed roſe, and feel the poignant ſmart; they are thorns even in life, but they are the ſharpeſt of thorns at the concluſion of it. They feſter in the wounded ſpirit; and while the heart-ſtrings are tearing aſunder, they add an agony beyond deſcription.

And other ſeed fell upon good ground, and ſprang up, and bare fruit an hundred fold; or as the other evangeliſts expreſs it, *ſome thirty, ſome ſixty,* and *ſome an hundred*

dred fold. And *theſe,* ſays our LORD, *are they, who in an honeſt, and good heart; having heard the word, keep it; and bring forth fruit, with patience.*

From theſe words, it is manifeſt, that ſome good diſpoſition of the heart, previous to hearing, is requiſite to render the word truly, and durably fruitful; and what that is, is eaſily collected, by attending to the deficiencies of the ſeveral caſes already conſidered.

In the firſt caſe, the ſeed ſown by the *way-ſide,* was loſt for want of proper *attention*; but he who receives the word into an *honeſt* and *good* heart, is one who is *ſincere,* and *conſiders* it duly; who calmly, and fully examines the benefits he may obtain, together with the afflictions which he may ſuffer, by adhering to it; and who is willing to do, and to ſuffer every thing required of him; that he may ſecure, and enjoy theſe bleſſings. Whereas in the *ſtony* ground,

ground, the ſeed was retained only for a time, and then caſt out; it ſoon roſe up, and as ſoon withered; but the ſeed ſown in the *honeſt* and *good* heart, is there retained, and *brings forth fruit, with patience.* And whereas in the *thorny* ground, it is ſo choked, as to become unfruitful, where it is; or it brings forth no mature fruit, no fruit which can riſe above the thorns; yet in the *honeſt* and *good* heart, it brings forth its *fruit unto perfection;* prevails, and triumphs over all ſenſual, and worldly appetites; and even over our love of life; *abounding in all the works of righteouſneſs, which are by* JESUS CHRIST, *unto the glory, and praiſe of GOD.*

Our LORD having explained this parable to his diſciples, acquainted them that he did not impart this knowledge to them, for their private information only; but that they might teach it to others; for, ſaith he, *no man, when he hath lighted a lamp, covereth it with a buſhel,*

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or putteth it under a bed; but ſetteth it on a ſtand, that they who enter in, may ſee the light, ſo *nothing is* now ſaid in *ſecret* by me, *that ſhould not be made manifeſt; neither any thing hidden, that ſhould not be known; and come abroad.* As if he had ſaid unto them, I give you a clear light, by which you may fully know the import of this, and other parables; but this I do, not for your benefit only; and therefore, it is not my will, that you ſhould hide it from others, or keep it to yourſelves; but that having thus learned, you may inſtruct others, how they ought to hear, and to receive the word heard into *honeſt*, and *good* hearts; and though I give you the knowledge of theſe myſteries, of the kingdom of GOD privately; it is not my intention, that you ſhould keep it to yourſelves; for *there is nothing* thus *hidden*, or hitherto concealed; *which ſhould not be made manifeſt*, neither was any thing made ſecret by me, but that it ſhould afterward, in due time, *come abroad.* Let not, therefore,

fore, the backwardneſs of the preſent generation, to receive the word, diſcourage you; or the perſecutions which will ariſe, affright you from preaching the goſpel, as deſpairing of its ſucceſs; for though at preſent it ſeems to be hidden from the world, and is likely to be obſcured, for a time, by the calumnies of the Jews, and others; yet I will cauſe it to *ſhine*, through all the world; and diſſipate all the clouds, which they may caſt over it; and break through all obſtructions, and will render it *mighty to caſt down every high thought, that exalteth itſelf, againſt the knowledge of GOD; and to bring into captivity, every thought, to the obedience of* CHRIST. Neither regard the calumnies, with which they ſhall load you; for I will make the innocency of your lives, and excellency, of your doctrine, appear as clear as the noon-day; and your patience in ſuffering for it, redound to your praiſe, honor, and glory, throughout all ages; and eſpecially at the laſt awful day of retribution.

tribution. *Take heed, therefore, how ye hear;* ſince ye are appointed, diligently to repeat my inſtructions to the world.

And ſurely, if this caution was neceſſary for the apoſtles; as being the meſſengers of JESUS, to extend the knowledge of his ſalvation, and publiſh his glad tidings; to explain his pure law, and deliver his divine inſtructions, to all the world; it muſt alſo be not only proper, but even neceſſary, for all to whom their words ſhall come. It therefore, becomes the duty of the miniſters of religion, frequently to *cry aloud*, and earneſtly to exhort ye, to *take heed*, how *ye hear;* and the more ſo, becauſe that fatal ſpirit of *careleſſneſs*, *lukewarmneſs*, and *inattention*, has taken ſo deep and general a poſſeſſion, of the minds of them who call themſelves by the name of JESUS.

I call upon *you*, therefore, my brethren, in the name of the LORD, to *take heed*

heed, how ye hear. Every opportunity of approaching to GOD, in his holy temple; of hearing what is his will, and your duty; is a favor, vouchſafed unto you, by the MOST HIGH; and therefore, ought to be received with proper diſpoſitions of mind. What thoſe diſpoſitions of mind are, I proceed to lay before you.

You are to hear the word with *humility*, and with *penitence*. When you reflect on the awful diſtance of GOD; his unſpeakable greatneſs, and his jealous holineſs; ſurely there is the greateſt reaſon to hear his word,—his moſt gracious word; with the *deepeſt humility;* and if you conſider how greatly, and frequently you have offended him, I believe, you muſt perceive, that *penitent contrition* belongs to you.

But humility, and penitence for paſt offences, are of no avail; unleſs ye earneſtly deſire a *full* amendment of life;—

unleſs ye *hunger, and thirſt after righteouſneſs;*—unleſs ye hear the word of GOD, with a fervent longing for complete inſtruction, and full improvement; and wiſh above all things, to gain *all* the advantage which the divine word holds out to you. That deſire will ever be ſucceeded by ſtrong reſolutions. And here, O let me ſolemnly declare, that thoſe reſolutions *muſt* be followed, by the moſt hearty endeavors of your own. It is in vain ye hear, unleſs ye *ſtrive* to the utmoſt for the maſtery. O *be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own ſelves!*

Whenever the diſciples of JESUS thus *take heed, how they hear;* the word will be received with gladneſs; gratitude, and joy, will expand their happy breaſts; and the true followers of our LORD will eſteem the words of his mouth *dearer than thouſands of gold, and ſilver.*

Conſe-

Conſequently they will hear with *attention*, and *care;* will *examine*, and *weigh* well what is delivered in the name of GOD; will *try* it by the ſure teſtimony of the Holy Scripture, and then judge for themſelves. And the judgment ſo formed, will ever be a judgment of *candor*, of *meekneſs*, and *love*.

The value of GOD's word being fully underſtood, and ſtrongly felt; the ſacred ſeaſons of hearing it will be duly eſteemed. And theſe wiſe, attentive, and affectionate hearers; may ever be known by their regular, conſtant, and *early* attendance in the temple of the LORD. They go with earneſtneſs, and delight, becauſe they ſhall hear the glad tidings of *pardon*, and *ſalvation;* and ſhall be comforted by a full explanation of their duty; and a warm enforcement, of the endearing motives, which can ſtrengthen them in the diſcharge of it. No trifling pretences, therefore, can keep

them from improving the ſolemn ſeaſons. As well might we expect, that the man, who is periſhing with hunger, ſhould ſpurn at an offered entertainment; or he who is dying with thirſt, be negligent of the brook that murmurs by his foot; as that the mind, which is rightly turned to religious concerns, and in a due degree; ſhould neglect, and waſte the opportunities of holy advantage; by regularly proſtituting part of the ſacred day, to the vain calls of earthly buſineſs, or the languors of indolence. On the contrary; *where the treaſure is, there will the heart be alſo.* If the treaſure is in heaven, the ready feet will follow the guidance of the heart, to the earthly courts of the LORD; and the meſſenger of ſalvation, will receive the unſpeakable pleaſure, of ſeeing, that fixed ſerioufneſs in the faces, and external demeanor, of his auditors; which well expreſſes the entire attention of the mind within; and affords

affords a reaſonable preſumption, that they indeed *take heed how they hear.*

But the hearing the word of GOD with attention, and joy, is of no avail; unleſs it be *well remembered.* As Mary laid up the ſayings of the LORD in her memory, and pondered them in her heart; ſo alſo muſt all ſincere diſciples of JESUS do, who wiſh to grow *wiſe unto ſalvation.* They muſt frequently meditate thereon; and above all, the word of GOD, the ſeed ſown, muſt become fruitful in their *lives.* It is not the orthodoxy of our opinions *only,* the mere luxuriance of ſentiment, or words;—It is not the vain boaſtings of an empty profeſſion; or the turbulent buſtle, which ſome people make about religious externals; that is the proper fruit, which the word of GOD is intended to produce; but LOVE TO ALL MANKIND diſplayed in all thoſe *beneficent actions,* which the providence of GOD puts in our power; and by which we may benefit

nefit each other. The noiſy diſturbance, which ſome men make about religious *opinions;* while they forget the great, and univerſal *law of* LOVE; is like a rapid, overbearing torrent; which has burſt its proper bounds, and drives furiouſly on; tearing down the banks, enlarging every breach, and beſtowing no one benefit; but bringing much miſchief in its courſe. With foaming violence the turbid billows ruſh forward, *caſting up mire and dirt.* Fierceneſs, and fury mark its way, with rugged injuries; and mankind behold its devaſtations, with general diſguſt. But the gentle, placid ſtream; like true, active, generous Religion; ſoftly, and ſmoothly, but ſteadily rolls on. It ſtops not, but ever purſues its happy courſe, with calm unabating perſeverance. No deſolations, nor even the ſlighteſt violence, mark its way; but it chears, enlivens, and fructifies, wherever it flows; and ſheds ſubſtantial bleſſings on every ſide. How muſical its murmurs! How beautiful its tranſparency

parency! We behold it with approving delight, and are eager to partake of its bleſſings. Thus the man, in whoſe heart, the good ſeed brings forth *fruit unto perfection;* is gentle, candid, and courteous to all. He is ready, at all times, to render every good office to others. He opens the ſtores, which the bounty of the GREAT PROPRIETOR, has entruſted to his ſtewardſhip; for the benefit of his fellow men. It is his delight, not alone to ſay, *Be ye filled, and be ye warmed;* but to *draw out his ſoul to the hungry, and to ſatisfy the afflicted with bread; to viſit*, and relieve *the fatherleſs, and the widows, in their affliction;* to leſſen, wherever he can, the pains, and languors of ſickneſs; and remove the horrors of a priſon; to clothe the naked; and to render every poſſible ſervice, to either the bodies, or the ſouls of his brethren. And if poverty is his lot, ſo that theſe eminent ſervices are not in his power; yet ſtill, of his little, he will chearfully impart a ſmall portion,

tion, to thoſe whoſe diſtreſſes are greater than his own. His temper is unruffled ſweetneſs. Tenderneſs, and ſympathy fill his ſoul. As occaſions offer, he will ſooth the ſorrowful heart; — he will kindly endeavor to wipe away every tear. He will never throw hindrances in the way of others, or paſs an uncharitable ſentence on any one, but will give counſel, advice, inſtruction, or affectionate reproof. The honor, and integrity of his whole character, will appear clear as the tranſparent ſtream. And finally, he will ever be fervent in prayer, for others, as well as himſelf.

O my brethren, if your attendance in the houſe of GOD, is of any avail to you hereafter; you muſt thus *take heed how you hear;* ſo that the ſeed ſown may ſpring up, and *bear its proper fruit* abundantly. Various reaſons may be urged, which preſs this upon you. I will inſtance a few of the moſt powerful.

Becauſe

Becauſe your own happineſs depends on your ſo doing; for your REDEEMER hath declared, in addition to the caution of the text; that *whoſoever hath* a *due* improvement of the talents, he hath received; ſhall be furthered by divine aid; for *to him ſhall be given* greater, and greater degrees of ability; and conſequently a greater reward; for we are aſſured there are *degrees in glory;* ſince *in his FATHER's houſe are many manſions, and as one ſtar differeth from another in glory, ſo ſhall the righteous ſhine in the kingdom of their FATHER.*

Becauſe your own miſery,—unſpeakable, eternal miſery, will be the conſequence of your not taking heed; for *from him who hath not* any improvement, of the opportunities beſtowed on him by GOD; *ſhall be taken away, even that which he ſeemeth to have;* or as the other Evangeliſts render it; *even that which he hath.* The fair appearance ſhall be ſtripped off, and the opportunity itſelf,

be forever removed, for *if the word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt; and every tranſgreſſion, and diſobedience, received a juſt recompence of reward; how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the* LORD; *and was confirmed unto us, by them who heard him?* O then, as ye repeatedly hear the word of the LORD; at your peril, be careful that ye *take heed how ye hear!*

And this is no matter which admits of delay; for the opportunities of hearing are but *few* at the moſt. Man's life is but a ſpan, at the longeſt; yet on that, depends your *eternal* ALL. And the utmoſt extent, even of that ſhort ſpan, is uncertain to every one of you. You have ſeen, with what ſwiftneſs, the ſhuttle paſſes through the loom:—Powerful emblem of human life!—But you have ſeen the thread ſnapped aſunder, in the *midſt* of that ſhort paſſage. Manhood, and even youth, muſt make the

the application. Is then a ſingle opportunity to be loſt, or neglected? The preſent ye are certain of,—The next is hidden in impenetrable obſcurity. While, therefore, the word of GOD, the meſſage of ſalvation; is ſounding abroad, *whoſo hath ears to hear, let him hear!*

Let not *youth* puff itſelf up, in the vanity of its imagination! Will ye rather *take heed how ye hear?*—Will ye attend, with ſuitable diſpoſitions of mind? —Then ſhall the ſalutary impreſſion ſtrike deep, while a voice from heaven preſſes on your ears: *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart chear thee, in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight of thy eyes; but know thou, that for all theſe things; GOD will bring thee to judgment.*

Will *manhood* dare to be negligent, and vain?—In the ſeaſon of riper judgment ſhall folly rule?—O GOD forbid it!

" *A Fool at* FORTY *is a fool indeed!*"

Hear then, the momentous advice of heaven; and *take heed how ye hear. Lay not up for yourſelves, treaſures upon earth; where moth, and ruſt doth conſume; and where thieves break through, and ſteal; but lay up for yourſelves, treaſures in heaven; where neither moth, nor ruſt doth conſume; and where thieves cannot break through, nor ſteal,* even *durable riches, and righteouſneſs.*

But above all, ſurely the *hoary* triflers ſtand upon a moſt tremendous precipice. *Few* are the opportunities that remain to you. Many are thoſe ye have neglected, and idly loſt. How often, during a *long* probation, have ye heard the ſound of the goſpel, calling ye to repentance! — And are ye yet in your ſins?

I have thus endeavored to explain, and enforce the ſubject. I hope you all

ſee

ſee its importance. I truſt a ſuitable ſerioufneſs now poſſeſſes ye; and that ye are deeply ſenſible of the urgency of your REDEEMER's caution. Carry the beneficial impreſſion to your cloſets. Conſult the ſacred page, and examine your own hearts thereby.

Ah! how many will thus perceive, that the ſeed has been thrown away, by the *way-ſide!*—That they have regularly attended the hearing of the word, in the common rotation of cuſtom; have frequently yawned away an indolent hour, and called it *devotion;* but have ſeldom, or never vouchſafed to beſtow a ſober conſideration, even on the word of the GOD, who made them. Aſtoniſhing infatuation! Monſtrous impiety! The LORD bring ye to ſober conſideration, before it be too late!

Let the inveſtigation go round! and O how many others will diſcover that the good ſeed has fallen upon a *rock!*—a rock

rock harder than marble, or the nether mill-ſtone! The GOD of heaven has called, and called repeatedly. They have heard his voice, have received the word with joy, and admired the eloquence of his meſſage; but to give up their favorite corruptions,—to endure any inconveniences, was a ſacrifice *too great.* O fools! fools! egregious fools! ye have *known your* LORD'S *will.* The dreadful ſentence is, ye *ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes.*—Gracious GOD, break the rock!—Take from them the hearts of ſtone, and give them hearts of fleſh!

O! has not the invaluable ſeed alſo fell among *thorns?* Many of ye know that it has. The downcaſt head, the reddening cheek, declare your deep diſgrace. What, has the GOD of heaven; time after time, been ſowing the ſeeds of wiſdom in your hearts: and have the paltry cares, the periſhing riches, the groveling imperfect pleaſures of this life, choked the word; and prevented its

its bringing forth fruit unto perfection? —Have ye attended the word of GOD, year after year, till hoary hairs have overtaken ye; and are ye yet unreformed thereby?—Has the GREAT HUSBANDMAN come twenty, thirty, forty, ſucceſſive ſeaſons; *ſeeking fruit;* and does he yet find none? I know not which is moſt aſtoniſhing; his long-ſuffering patience, or your madneſs. It is almoſt reaſonable to deſpair of ye for ever. O *if ye will* at laſt *hear, harden not your hearts, as in the* paſt *day of provocation!* The LORD GOD has not yet forſaken ye, He ſends ye another meſſage,—a tremendous meſſage indeed! yet it comes in mercy. *The faſhion of this world paſſeth away.* The uncertain riches in which ye truſt, ſhall *make themſelves wings, and flee away* for ever. The pleaſures of this life, are *vanity, and vexation of ſpirit. What ſhall it profit a man, to have gained the whole world; when GOD taketh away his ſoul?*

But

But I ſurely truſt, there are among you, a *happy few*, who have received the ſeed into *good* ground; even into *honeſt*, and *good* hearts; and *brought forth fruit unto perfection;*—who are ſo far from depreciating the good works, by which your faith is made manifeſt; that ye ſtudy, to *be always abounding in the work of the Lord;*—to *let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your FATHER who is in heaven,*—who know that external modes, and profeſſions, are of no avail; without the *internal eſſence* of religion. Whether ye are church-men *, or diſſenters;—whether ye belong to that ſociety, for whom I muſt hereafter give a ſolemn account; or are members of any other branch of the univerſal church; I bleſs GOD on your behalf.—I ſalute ye, as brethren, in the name of the LORD; and earneſtly entreat ye, to *ſuffer the word of exhortation.*

* Theſe diſcourſes were preached to a *mixed* congregation.

O re-

O remember continually, that without the *greateſt induſtry*, and *care*, even the good ground may degenerate; thorns, and thiſtles, may take root therein, and deſtroy the moſt promiſing hopes. That induſtry, and care, muſt be *conſtant*, and *without intermiſſion;* or it may even become hard as a rock, impenetrable by every divine impreſſion. Nay, have we not too frequently, and ſadly ſeen the moſt fatal inſtances, of its becoming even like the *way-ſide;* when they who have begun to run well, and who have *brought forth the fruits of righteouſneſs with patience*, have *fallen from their ſtedfaſtneſs?* They have gradually given way, more and more, till, (ſtrange, and dreadful to tell!) they have at laſt, been *given up to ſtrong deluſions*, and even exalted to *the ſeat of the ſcornful.* So *the laſt ſtate of ſuch men has been worſe than the firſt.*

O then, *let him who thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall!* Continue to

take heed how ye hear. Be watchful, be diligent, ſee that ye bring forth your fruit, according to the ſeveral capacities, which GOD has given ye; *ſome* THIRTY, *ſome* SIXTY, *ſome an* HUNDRED *fold.*

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

Modes of Religion, or the Form of Godlineſs, of no value; without the Subſtance and Power thereof.

Galatians vi. 15.

In CHRIST JESUS, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; but a* NEW CREATURE.

THIS epiſtle was not written, as moſt of St. Paul's were, to the chriſtians of a particular city; but to thoſe of a conſiderable diſtrict in Aſia. They had moſt readily embraced the goſpel, but after St. Paul's departure from them, it happened, that certain

men came among them, who taught that the ceremonial law was ſtill in force; and that it was the duty of all the followers of JESUS, to obſerve its rites. They particularly inſiſted on circumciſion, as previous to the reſt. To give ſome plauſibility to their aſſertion, they affirmed, that all the other apoſtles taught thus, except St. Paul; who they ſaid, was inferior to the reſt. And in order to ſet his authority totally aſide in this matter, they alſo affirmed, that even he, ſometimes practiſed, and recommended the law; though at other times, he oppoſed it. Thus they brought a heavy charge of inconſiſtency againſt him. And by theſe means, they very much diſturbed theſe new converts; unſettled them from the foundation, on which they were built; and cauſed many to waver exceedingly in their minds.

To remedy the evil, which theſe falſe teachers had thus introduced; is the general purport of this epiſtle: And it is written

written with the utmoſt judgment, and brings conviction along with it. He begins by aſſerting his *authority*, and *equality* to the reſt of the apoſtles; and vindicates his doctrine, as having, like them, received it from CHRIST *himſelf*. He proves that it was the *ſame* which the other apoſtles preached; and that his practice was *conſiſtent* with his doctrine.

Having thus ſet aſide their miſchievous inſinuations concerning himſelf, he defends the doctrine of juſtification by faith in CHRIST; by that living, active, faith; which is elſewhere deſcribed, as producing *all holineſs* in the heart, and life. This he oppoſes to the works of the law, by the merit of which, no one living could be juſtified.

With the moſt wholeſome ſeverity, he reproves the Galatians, for their unſtedfaſtneſs; and ſtrongly exhorts them, to maintain *the liberty, wherewith* CHRIST

had

had made them free. Yet leſt they ſhould run into that common miſtake, of corrupt man;—leſt they ſhould form falſe ideas of this liberty, and imagine it to be conſiſtent with *licentiouſneſs;* he warns them not to abuſe it, and admoniſhes them to walk *not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit.*

Thus to give them *true* ideas of their liberty, he aſſures them, that it is not the *moral* part of the law, which was abrogated by JESUS CHRIST; but the *ceremonial only,* which had died of itſelf, in *the fulneſs of time.* He therefore, exhorts them not to be *weary of well doing,* and at laſt moſt clearly, and beautifully, ſums up the whole of chriſtianity, in this ſhort verſe; *In* CHRIST JESUS, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but a* NEW CREATURE.

This is, as if he had ſaid, in this *pure* and *perfect* diſpenſation of the REDEEMER, external forms, and ceremonies are of

of no avail. Circumciſion, by which that people, whom GOD has choſen to preſerve his name; have been diſtinguiſhed, from the reſt of the nations; is no longer of any ſignification; for He who is *the glory of Iſrael*, is alſo become *a light to enlighten the Gentiles*. The ſhades of pagan darkneſs have given way; and the knowledge of *the true GOD, and* JESUS CHRIST, *whom he has ſent*, has been extended unto them, who formerly bowed the knee to idols. Neither can any of the ceremonial law be of longer duration, or farther uſe; for theſe former *types, and ſhadows of good things to come*, are ſuperſeded, by the appearance of Him, whom they prefigured, and pointed out. They were ſhadows only, but the ſubſtance, *the body is* CHRIST. As circumciſion is become nothing, ſo alſo is uncircumciſion nothing. Theſe are become matters of total indifference. GOD hath ſet up his ſtandard, and called the nations from afar, even from the ends of the earth;

and

and therefore, neither circumciſion, nor uncircumciſion, can be any diſtinction, by which his ſervants can *now* be known. Theſe can avail nothing to recommend mankind to GOD. In CHRIST JESUS i. e. among the believers in his name, and profeſſors of his goſpel, nothing can be of any avail, to conciliate the Divine Favor, and procure happineſs; *but a new creature*, or as it is better rendered *a new creation*.

This is as ſtrong an idea as language is capable of expreſſing, and as one of the greateſt meſſengers of truth hath delivered it, by the ſpirit of inſpiration, it is certain that much meaning muſt be contained therein.

We are hereby informed that nothing leſs than this *new creation* can be of advantage to us in the ſight of GOD. It is therefore a moſt intereſting ſubject of enquiry *wherein* this conſiſts; which I will briefly endeavor to ſhew.

To

To know wherein this new creation conſiſts, we muſt ſurvey mankind in their *natural* eſtate. Let us look round the world, and we may too ſoon ſee by the deplorable proſpect, what human nature is. By their fruits they are eaſily known. Alas! what thouſands are there, who are the conſtant drudges of wickedneſs, whoſe feet run with eagerneſs in every evil way; who are tied and bound with the chain of their ſins, yet who are ſo infatuated that they feel not the weight of the chain, but fondly careſs even that which binds them to deſtruction.—What a terrible vaſſalage is this?—What a deplorable infatuation, when the powers of mind are rendered ſo torpid, and inſenſible, by the *deceitfulneſs of ſin;* that its deformity is not perceived! Others there are, who are not ſo groſsly wicked; who paſs on, as common, ſober characters, in the eſtimation of the world; becauſe their more private vices are not publicly known. But do not theſe alſo equally diſplay the depravity of the hu-

man heart; although that depravity does not appear in the ſame kind of evil fruits? They are not *murderers, adulterers, fornicators,* or *thieves.* It may be they are not *perjured,* nor *profane ſwearers,* nor *drunkards,* nor guilty of any of thoſe enormities, which more ſtrongly ſtrike our attention, and abhorrence; but are they not the habitual ſlaves of other corrupt tempers, paſſions, and appetites? Men of one deſcription *walk in a vain ſhew, and diſquiet themſelves in vain; by heaping up riches, which they cannot tell who ſhall gather.* Their whole ſouls are intent on the purſuit of *gain,* and *the GOD of this world* hath ſo blinded their eyes, that he is the *only* deity they truly worſhip; for he *poſſeſſeth their hearts.* Others bow down to the demon of *ambition.* They muſt have power, and pre-eminence, at all events; let them be obtained by what means they may. With others the love of *Fame,* is the darling idol, to which they daily ſacrifice every thing valuable.

able. And who can deſcribe the *pride*, the *anger*, the *malice*, the *revenge*, with thouſand other *evil* diſpoſitions which inhabit the human breaſt, and continually poiſon our words, and actions? Where is the man who feels not the frequent workings of ſome of theſe corrupt tempers in his heart, and in whoſe conduct they do not too often appear? Alas *there is not*, in his natural ſtate, *a juſt* or righteous *man upon the earth; who doth good, and ſinneth not*, for *behold, we were ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did our mothers conceive us;*—we were born into the world with weakened powers, depraved judgments, and a propenſity to evil; and *we all, like ſheep, have gone aſtray; we have turned every one to his own way;* and given frequent proofs in ourſelves, that *the carnal mind is enmity againſt GOD*, that it *is not ſubject to the law of GOD, neither indeed can be.* Thus do men naturally walk in the *vanity of their minds*, being *alienated from the life of GOD.* Alas, we know that *the whole*

world lieth in wickedneſs! and moſt true is the ſad obſervation, which may be applied to human nature in general; that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked. The ſcripture,* therefore, *hath concluded all under ſin,* and *the* ſad *wages of ſin is death;*— death temporal, and eternal.

To teach us to eſcape from this deplorable bondage, and its dreadful conſequences; is the great end of the goſpel; and for that reaſon, it ſhews us, what *we are by nature,* and what we *may be by grace.* The firſt of theſe, I have endeavored to hold up to your view. The latter, being that GREAT CHANGE which muſt paſs upon the ſoul of every one who is ſaved eternally; I will attempt to lay before you alſo. It is emphatically ſtiled καινὴ κτίσις, a NEW CREATION, intimating that the human nature is ſo corrupt, as to need a *total* renovation; and alſo plainly declaring that ſo great a work is this new creation, that nothing

nothing leſs than the finger of GOD, which formed the firſt creation can effect it. The man who is thus *renewed in the ſpirit of his mind*, is no longer the ſervant, and ſlave, of corrupt luſts, and evil actions. He is taught to ſee the depravity of his former conduct in every point of view. The ſcales are removed from his eyes, and the aſtoniſhed mourner, beholds in its full deformity

"*That hideous ſight, a naked human heart.*"

Pierced to the ſoul, he laments, and mourns over his paſt ſins; and humbles himſelf in the duſt before the LORD. In haſte to know *what he muſt do to be ſaved*, he flies to the ſcriptures of truth; which are *able to make him wiſe unto ſalvation*. He reads with delight, with ſhame, with ſelf abaſement, that JESUS CHRIST *came into the world, to ſave ſinners*. He feels his inſufficiency to help himſelf, and eagerly preſents the fervent

vent aſpiration, to the throne of grace; LORD *ſave, or I periſh!* His heart kindles at the thought of *redemption*, and he abhors his paſt conduct, and condemns himſelf more and more, for having ſo ill requited the tranſcendant love of the REDEEMER, and grieved the good ſpirit of GOD, while ſtriving with him. Senſible of the numerous, and wily ſtratagems of the tempter, and his own extreme weakneſs; he prays moſt earneſtly for *grace to help in every time of need.* He implores the benign agency of GOD's Holy Spirit, *to cleanſe the thoughts of his heart*, and to *renew a right ſpirit within him;* that he may perfectly love the LORD, and worthily magnify his holy name in all his conduct. He learns to watch over himſelf, and *ſtrives*, in concurrence with the divine aid, to ſuppreſs every riſing evil. He faithfully endeavors to uſe the grace given, and *runs the way of GOD's commandments with delight.*

Though

Though formerly, perhaps, *GOD was not in any of his thoughts*, yet now, he *delights in the LORD, and rejoices in the GOD of his ſalvation.* Though formerly, he was *dead in treſpaſſes, and ſins;* and perhaps, even *gloried in his ſhame;* while *fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh*, and *working all uncleanneſs with greedineſs;* yet now, he hath *put on the whole armor of GOD*, and in dependance on the divine ſtrength, fights manfully againſt the *world*, the *fleſh*, and the *devil.* Nay he aſpires after *all* holineſs of heart. Though *pride* once *encompaſſed him about as a chain*, and *violence covered him as a garment;* he now learns to be *meek* and *lowly in heart; tender, placable, forgiving*, and *loving unto every man.* Has he been the ſlave of *avarice?*—He now knows that *godlineſs with contentment is great gain.* Has he formerly been *hard*, and unfeeling?—The rock is broken, the flint is melted. Now let the dejected widow, and plaintive orphan appear before him. Let the ſon of ſorrow lift up the

ſuppli-

cating eye. They ſhall no more meet the harſh repulſe; but a chearing ſmile ſhall ſooth their woes—

" *His heart is made of tenderneſs,*
" *His bowels melt with love.*"

If he has ability, he extends a moſt liberal hand to their relief.—If he is poor—

" *He gives to mis'ry all he has,—a tear.*"

He weeps with them who weep. Has he formerly taken the lead, and conducted others into the paths of ſin?—His heart now ſhrinks within him at the thought, and he labors earneſtly to perſuade them to return. He beholds the wretched wanderers in the ways of vice, not with a tranſient pity only; but with poignant concern. The love of CHRIST, and of human ſouls, conſtraining him; he ſtrives to induce them to quit the dangerous path, and endeavors to lead them back to *the fountain which is opened*

for

for ſin, and for uncleanneſs: Here he eagerly bids them *waſh, and be clean*; as happily knowing that *the blood of* JESUS CHRIST *cleanſeth from all ſin*. Has he formerly given up his whole ſoul to *ambition?*—He now ſeeketh not *honor* from *men*, but *that honor only, which is from GOD*. Was he formerly immoderate in the purſuit of *fame?*—Now, though he wiſhes for a good report among men, it is only with a view to the *glory of GOD*, and that he may be *more eminently uſeful* to his brethren. For this he wiſhes that his *light may ſhine before men, that they alſo may glorify his FATHER who is in heaven*. Was he formerly *wrathful, paſſionate, eaſily provoked?*—All theſe tempers *die daily* in him. By the grace of GOD, he ſtrives for the maſtery, and he obtains it. Was he *frothy, vain* and *trifling* in his converſation?—Behold, a deep ſerioufneſs of ſpirit hath taken hold of him! and the man is now *always* ſenſible of the preſence of GOD. He remembers who

hath declared, *that every idle word, which men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof, in the day of judgment;* and is, therefore, ever on his guard, with reſpect to the *tendency* of his common diſcourſe; well knowing that *that* alſo will be taken into account, at the day of judgment; and according as *that tendency* is good, or evil; *by his words he ſhall be juſtified, or condemned.* He alſo endeavors to improve the too generally perverted talent of *ſpeech* to advantage, and upon every fit occaſion, he will introduce ſomething, which may tend to edification.

Thus is he throughly *changed* in the deſires, tempers, and habits of his mind. *Old things are paſſed away, and behold! all things are become new.* He now loves GOD *with all his heart, and with all his ſoul, and with all his mind; and his neighbor as himſelf.* His whole endeavor is to *glorify GOD, in his body, and in his ſpirit.* He knows that he is commanded to

to *abound in the works of the LORD*, he therefore, ſtrives to ADORN *the doctrine of GOD his* SAVIOR *in all things*. Is not this a change indeed? When we conſider this *total* alteration, does not the beautiful propriety of the apoſtles expreſſion appear? — *a New Creation!* — Such indeed it is, for the man is now, in every reſpect, the reverſe of what he was. Happy man! — When he was wicked, he was *like a troubled ſea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt*. Now he poſſeſſeth the unſpeakable *peace of GOD*.

" *Which nothing earthly gives, or can deſtroy,*
" *The ſouls calm ſun-ſhine, and the heart-felt joy.*"

My brethren, I have endeavored, to ſhew you, what I apprehend, to be the full meaning of the apoſtles words. And this *new creation*, the GOD of goodneſs is ready to work in the hearts of all who

will come unto him. This is perfectly conſiſtent with our freedom. *He* gives us a *choice:* If we chuſe aright, *He* beſtows *ability:* If we uſe that faithfully, *He* confers *greater* ability; and thus by his aid, we *work out our ſalvation; and make our calling, and election* SURE. All this you perhaps admit in ſpeculation, but, permit me, to bring the matter home to yourſelves. If nothing can avail in the ſight of GOD but this *new creation;* this *complete* renovation in heart, and life; are *you* thus qualified to receive his favor. It is a moſt important enquiry. O lay your hands on your hearts, and now ſolemnly make the neceſſary ſcrutiny. Has this great change in no part, or degree taken place in your minds? Have you never been ſenſible of your guilt, and your unworthineſs in the ſight of GOD? Have you never perceived the danger of your ſtate, as unreformed, and conſequently unpardoned ſinners? Then are ye *yet in your ſins;* in the *gall of bitterneſs, in the bond*

bond of iniquity. The LORD deliver you, from this more than Egyptian bondage; and make you free indeed!

Some of you have perhaps, for many years, attended the ſervice of GOD, in your pariſh churches *; but to what purpoſe, if ye have not yet learned experimentally the firſt rudiments of the goſpel;—if ye have never yet repented of your ſins, and brought forth *fruit meet for repentance?* How often have you profeſſed to pray to GOD, to *cleanſe the thoughts of your hearts, by the inſpiration of his Holy Spirit; that you may* PERFECTLY LOVE HIM; *and worthily* MAGNIFY *his holy name.* And has this been an unmeaning petition in your mouths? Do you ſtill continue the ſame carnal, ſenſual characters, as thoſe who make no religious profeſſion? I muſt addreſs you alſo, who diſſent from the eſtabliſhment, who boaſt of a purer worſhip,

* Theſe diſcourſes were delivered to a *mixed* auditory conſiſting of the diſſenters and many friends of the eſtabliſhment.

and

and think you enjoy ſuperior advantages. O have you endeavored to improve to the utmoſt under this perſwaſion? Is your religious worſhip, as elevated as it ought to be,—and as effectual? Has the grace of GOD its proper renovating courſe in you? Or do you remain, notwithſtanding your fair profeſſion; as earthly, ſenſual, or worldly-minded, as the bulk of mankind who know not GOD? If ſo, alas! all your religious profeſſion is nothing. As *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion,* under the perfect diſpenſation of the goſpel; which requires purity, and *truth in the inward parts;* ſo alſo, the pureſt modes of worſhip among chriſtians, are of no ſignification in the ſight of GOD; if the great end of the goſpel is not anſwered in the ſoul. JESUS CHRIST *came to redeem us from all iniquity,* and *to purify unto himſelf a peculiar people;* who have this diſtinction, that they are *zealous of good works.* While therefore this character does not belong to you, you are none of his. O tremble leſt your

your ſlighted opportunities ſhould be ſuddenly cut off; and at laſt, when reflection comes too late, you ſhould hear the judge pronounce the tremendous command: *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; for I never knew you.* O cry mightily unto GOD for his aid through JESUS CHRIST; and He, who is willing, and able, to *ſave to the uttermoſt;* will have compaſſion upon you. O relinquiſh the keen purſuit of worldly vanities; and let *pure, and undefiled religion* have place in your hearts. In dependance on GOD's bleſſing, and aid; *ſtrive to keep his ſayings*, and then your weakneſs ſhall be *made perfect in his ſtrength;* you ſhall be completely *renewed in the ſpirit of your minds*; and ſhall be taught, and enabled to *walk in all the commandments, and ordinances of the* LORD *blameleſs*, and to glorify GOD in all things.

Indulge me with a ſhort addreſs to you, who know, by happy experience, the

the truth of our apoſtles aſſertion; and who faithfully endeavor to improve the grace of GOD. O *ſuffer ye*, my brethren, *the word of exhortation.* Remember that by conſtant, fervent prayer; and unceaſing watchfulneſs alone; you ſtand againſt the evil of the world, and the weakneſs of your own nature. As it is *GOD* who *worketh in you, both to will, and to do; of his own good pleaſure:* i. e. who hath graciouſly conferred on you the power; both of *willing*, and *acting;* it is *your's* to uſe that power diligently, and to *work out your ſalvation; with* that unceaſing care, and anxious ſolicitude; which is ſtrongly, but juſtly, expreſſed by *fear, and trembling. Go on in the name of the* LORD, *and in the power of his might.* Ye have already *put on the* LORD JESUS CHRIST, be careful that ye *grow up, in all things, into* CHRIST, *your head;* until ye attain all *the mind which was in Him,* and become *throughly furniſhed unto every good word, and work; perfecting holineſs in the fear of the* LORD.

Happy,—

Happy,—inexpreſſibly happy ſhall ye then be, when thus newly created: Ye ſhall then know that the ways of true Religion, *are ways of pleaſantneſs; and* that *all her* flowery *paths are peace.*

O GOD of goodneſs, grant that this may be our happy experience, for JESUS CHRIST's ſake! Amen.

SERMON XIV.

Peter's Weakneſs, Repentance, and ſubſequent boldneſs in the Goſpel, practically conſidered.

Luke, Chapter xxii. Verſe 61.

And the LORD *turned, and looked upon Peter.*

MANY are the paſſages in ſcripture, which declare to us, that there is no perfect character upon the earth; by which, I mean, that there never has been, except the REDEEMER; a perſon, who through his whole life, was deſtitute of faults, and much leſs of infirmities. And indeed, our own obſerva-

tion aſſures us of the ſame, as a certain truth. The brighteſt human characters, if juſtly drawn, muſt be of a *mixed* kind. And ſuch we find, even the moſt diſtinguiſhed worthies, mentioned in the ſacred books to have been. And what is perhaps, a conſiderable proof, of the truth of thoſe books; and of the honeſty, and humility, of theſe divine teachers; is that they always ſpeak of themſelves, and each other, *ſoberly, as they ought to ſpeak;* and with an ingenuous ſimplicity, publiſh not only their failings, and infirmities, but their principal faults alſo. Thus the evangeliſts have all related this ſhameful page, in the hiſtory of Peter. And Peter himſelf, though a man of the quickeſt feelings, was of too generous a ſpirit, to deſire the concealment, or ſuppreſſion of a ſingle circumſtance, which might warn others of the rock on which he had ſplit; or which might make known the wonderful love of his maſter, which he had experienced. Nay ſo far was

he

he from this; that when Mark, at the deſire of many, had written his goſpel; Peter reviſed it, and eſtabliſhed the reading of it, in the churches; as may be ſeen in *Euſebius's Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory.*

I cannot (as ſome do) think Peter's denial of his maſter, a mere infirmity. —No indeed, though it took its riſe in *fear*, yet ſurely it was a ſhameful defection;—a heinous, and flagrant ſin. As ſuch the LORD conſidered it, and as ſuch Peter beheld it himſelf. Yet nevertheleſs he afterward became one of the nobleſt champions of the truth,—a ſingularly great, and ſhining character.

Let us deſcend a little to particulars, and conſider his behavior; and we muſt then by the way, take a brief ſurvey of the kind, and affectionate treatment which he experienced from his maſter.

When

When the feaſt of unleavened bread drew nigh, JESUS ſent *Peter,* and *John;* who were almoſt continually about his perſon; to make the neceſſary preparations for celebrating the paſſover; *and when the hour was come, he ſat down, and the twelve apoſtles with him.* When the ſacred rite was concluded, the maſter in a moſt ſolemn, and affecting manner, took leave of the twelve. He told them plainly, that *his hour was drawing nigh;* and aſſured them, that he then knew his betrayer; who would be *one of them.* This ſad information ſtruck them with amazement, and diſtreſs; and as *Matthew* informs us, *they were exceeding ſorrowful, and began every one of them, to ſay to him:* LORD, *Is it I?* and we may very properly ſuppoſe that it made a deep impreſſion on Peter's mind. And his affection toward his maſter, ſeemed to himſelf ſo ſtrong, and great; that when the LORD ſaid unto them: *All ye ſhall be offended, becauſe of me, this night;* he with the open, unſuſpecting eagerneſs, natural to his temper; replied, *although*

though all men ſhall be offended yet will not I. Alas! Poor Peter! It is ſad experience muſt teach thee, what is in the human heart. How little did he know of himſelf! But JESUS, who read his yet unfaſhioned thoughts; replied, with ſo affecting a certainty; as one ſhould have thought would have rouſed all his reflections, and put him ſtrongly on his guard: *Verily, I ſay unto thee; this day, even in this night* i. e. before the day, and night are concluded; — before twenty-four hours are paſſed; nay even *before the cock crow twice, thou ſhalt deny me thrice. But Peter ſaid the more vehemently; If I ſhould die with thee, I will not deny thee; no, not in any wiſe. In like manner, ſaid they all,* It does not appear that our LORD made any ſecond reply, either to Peter, or the reſt. He left him to the bitter conviction which a few hours would bring; and his tenderneſs would not aggravate their ſin thereby.

Here

Here your reflection naturally turns to Peter's vain confidence in himself.—May the reflection ſink deep, and be profitable unto ye!—Ye ſee what human ſtrength and dependance is.

Let us proceed. When our LORD went from thence, to the garden of Gethſemane; he left Peter, and James, and John, a little behind him; while he went forward to pray; but at his return, he found them all *ſleeping;* and ſaid to *Peter: Simon, what ſleepeſt* THOU? After all that boaſted confidence, *could* THOU *not watch one hour?*

Behold the traitor! and with him a great multitude! Soon began the tumult, and then (ſtrange as it may ſeem!) his faſt friends, who ſo lately declared they would *die with him;* even they, *all forſook him, and fled.* But Peter's attachment ſtill led him to follow, though *afar off;*—at ſuch a diſtance, as he ſuppoſed would ſecure him from danger. And he

he went even to the palace of the high prieſt, and mixed among the ſervants. And while he ſtood there, one of the maids, when ſhe ſaw him ſaid, *and thou alſo, waſt with* JESUS *of Nazareth;* But notwithſtanding he had been ſo forewarned by his maſter, *he denied, ſaying, I know not the man; neither underſtand I what thou ſayeſt.* Yet he ſeems to have been ſomewhat confuſed, for he immediately left the fire, and went out into the porch. *And the cock crew,* though before his uſual hour. The admonition was in vain, for he was ſpeedily attacked again by another maid, who ſaw him, and told them who ſtood by: *This is one of them.* And *he denied again,* but not with a ſimple denial as before: He now plunged a ſtep deeper into iniquity, and added an *oath.* Before he was guilty of *cowardice,* baſe *ingratitude,* and *falſhood;* but to theſe crimes, he has now added another of deeper dye; and wretched, perjured Peter, ſtill preſſes on:—His heart is hardened:—

His recollection is ſubdued:—His former fine, and compaſſionate feelings are benumbed:—Nay, even his once boaſted *love* for his maſter, ſeems forgotten, if not totally extinct. He returned into the palace; and probably was witneſs to the cruel, and inſulting treatment which his maſter received; for it is plain, that at the time of his *third* denial; he muſt have been in the ſame apartment with JESUS; otherwiſe the LORD could not have *turned, and looked upon him.*

Yet *about an hour after,* when he had had plenty of time for recollection, another charged him with having been the companion of JESUS; and ſaid, *ſurely thou art one of them, for thy ſpeech betrayeth thee!* Aſtoniſhing as may ſeem, he began to *curſe,* and to *ſwear;* ſaying alſo *I know not this man, of whom ye ſpeak.* One crime naturally produces another. They ſeldom, or never, come *ſingle;* but follow each other, like the links of a chain.

chain. And none but HE, whoſe penetrating knowledge ſurveys the deepeſt receſſes of futurity; can ſay where the *firſt* criminal compliance ſhall end; or how far the *firſt* deviation from the path of duty, may lead the wretched ſinner aſtray. Peter at this *third* denial, could imprecate a *curſe* upon himſelf, and *ſwear* with an *oath* to a *falſity*; though even in the preſence, and within the hearing of his injured maſter. O what is man!—Even JESUS, the meek, the holy, the loving JESUS, was *deſerted*;—deſerted in the hour of his *extreme diſtreſs*;—deſerted by his *friends*;—whom he came to *benefit*, and on whom he had beſtowed his abundant *love*, and *bleſſing*;—not one friend was left to ſooth his diſtreſſes.—Not one adherent ſhewed fidelity to him.—Bitter *ingratitude*, and ſtinging *deſertion* lead the way, and introduce the mighty ſorrows of the SON of GOD. Even *Peter*, ſo lately full of the warmeſt proteſtations of love, and earneſtly expreſſing his boaſted attach-

ment;—angry that he ſhould be ſuſpected *only* of frailty;—even Peter, has *denied* him;—has denied him *thrice;*—has *ſworn* to the falſity;—and even in his preſence, imprecated bitter *curſes* upon himſelf *if he knew the man.* Surely never was *ſorrow like his ſorrow, when it pleaſed the* LORD *to bruiſe him.*

And immediately, while he yet ſpake, the cock crew again. And the LORD *turning, looked upon Peter.* O what a look was there!—A look tenderly expreſſive of *ſorrow, pity, love, reproof.* It darted conviction to his ſoul; overſpread his face with burning bluſhes; filled his heart with agonizing remorſe; and rouſed a conflict of jarring paſſions within, which rendered his boſom the ſeat of *ſudden* anarchy; and bad all peace depart. Smote by that piercing eye, his former love returned. He could no longer ſtay, within the ſight of his injured maſter; but *ruſhing forth*

*forth** from the company *he went out, and wept bitterly.*

Behold the fallen, guilty, wretched, weeping, repentant Peter!—Behold him eſcaped from all human obſervation!—He has *covered his head,* to conceal his ſhame.—See ſelf-condemned he ſtands, and pours forth the mighty ſorrows of his ſoul. The briny torrent guſhes from his eyes, and ſtreams in rivers

* The Greek word ἐπιβαλὼν, which St. Mark uſes chap. xiv. verſe 72, is here variouſly underſtood by different commentators. Some underſtand it to imply an act of the *mind.* So the tranſlators have rendered it, in our common verſion; thus, *when he thought thereon.* Others think it refers to a *bodily* act, viz. his going out from the preſence of JESUS, and the aſſembly; and they tranſlate it, *ruſhing out;* i. e. from the company. Dr. Whitby produces ſome good authorities for this ſenſe of the word; and this ſeems to agree well with the other evangeliſts. who ſay *he went out.* Others there are, who tranſlate it *he covered,* viz. his head; which was an uſual cuſtom with mourners, and was fitly expreſſive both of grief, and ſhame. It is impoſſible, therefore, to ſay which is the writers ſenſe of the word here; but it is not improbable, that each of theſe ſenſes may be conſiſtent with truth! viz. that *when he thought upon* his perfidy, he *ruſhing forth* from the company, went out; *covered his head*; and *wept bitterly.*

down

down his cheeks; while his laboring boſom heaves with an agony, almoſt inſupportable; and beyond deſcription.

Can oceans of tears waſh out the guilty ſtain?—Can the moſt poignant ſorrows make atonement for *ingratitude*, *deſertion*, *falſhood*, and *perjury?* — Ah, no!—But the ſlighted, the abuſed, the offended maſter may forgive. — The weeping penitent may be reſtored to favor, to affection, to his maſter, to himſelf, to peace.

The boaſted tower of ſelf-confidence was fallen; laid low, and humbled in the duſt. And Peter having gained this bitter addition to his knowledge, probably went dejected, *hanging down his head as a bulruſh;* and ſorrowing for his crucified maſter.—Could he remember him without returning agony? — Perhaps every recollection opened the ſluices of ſorrow afreſh.—His eye ſtill ſaw his maſter before the inſulting tribunal.—

bunal.—His imagination ſtill ſhrunk from the penetrating look.—Guilt, ſhame, and remorſe, kept poſſeſſion of his aching heart, and faded cheek; and he went *mourning all the day.*

A broken, and contrite heart; O GOD, thou wilt not deſpiſe!

Go your way, ſaid the angel to the women, after the REDEEMER's reſurrection; *tell his diſciples, and* eſpecially *Peter; that he goeth before you into Galilee, there ſhall ye ſee him.*—Bid the mourner dry his tears; ſpeak peace to his throbbing heart; and tell him, that JESUS, his maſter, is not here; but *is riſen.*—Tell him, that he is loving unto every returning offender.—Bid him *be of good cheer.—His ſins are forgiven.*

One declaration of mercy is ſucceeded by another. The REDEEMER delights in forgiveneſs. He hath ſent a meſſage of pardon, and love, to the drooping mourner.—

mourner.—His tenderneſs repeats the healing ſound; and confirms from *himſelf* the comfort adminiſtered by the angel to Peter, and the reſt of the eleven. *Mary ſtood without, at the ſepulchre, weeping,—and ſhe turned herſelf back, and ſaw* JESUS *ſtanding:*—*Go,* ſaid he, *to my* BRETHREN, *and ſay to them,* for their comfort, *I aſcend* (ſhortly) *to my FATHER, and your FATHER; to my GOD, and your GOD;* but *go ye* firſt *into Galilee, and there ſhall ye ſee me.* How ſtrong the aſſurances of pardon, and favor! for *Mary,* a *forgiven* ſinner; is ſent with the meſſage of love, even to them who *forſook him, and fled,*—even to *Peter,* the weakeſt of the weak!—How tender, how delicate the meſſage!—Not the ſlighteſt notice is taken of their ingratitude, nor even of Peter's foul denial.—Their ſorrow has been ſeen.—Their repentance accepted.—Their guilt is cancelled, and forgiven; and they are *brethren* ſtill.—For JESUS was *anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek,*—he was *ſent to bind*

up

up the broken hearted;—to comfort all that mourn;—to *ſtrengthen the hands which hang down,* and to *confirm the feeble knees. The bruiſed reed he would not break.—The ſmoking flax he would not quench.*—To ſpeak peace to his laboring boſom, the PRINCE OF PEACE ſoon appeared to Peter; for we read, that the two diſciples, to whom he appeared in their walk to Emmaus; *returned to Jeruſalem,* and *found the eleven gathered together;—ſaying, the* LORD *is riſen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.* And *after theſe things,* JESUS *ſhewed himſelf again, to ſeven of the diſciples, at the ſea of Tiberias.* Among theſe was Peter, and remarkable indeed was his conduct. When John, convinced by the miraculous multitude of fiſhes, informed him that it was JESUS; with what eagerneſs, did he haſten to greet his reconciled maſter! *He girt his fiſhers coat about him, and caſt himſelf into the water,* to wade to ſhore; not waiting for the boat, in which the reſt followed him. Who can read the ſequel,

without feeling the fine addreſs of the REDEEMER, in the converſation, which paſſed between him, and his now reſtored, and faithful ſervant?—After CHRIST had given him a commiſſion to preach the goſpel, Peter had returned to his *fiſhing* trade; in which occupation our LORD now found him engaged: And after they had landed, and when they had eaten; JESUS *ſaith to Simon Peter; Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me more than theſe?* pointing to his nets, and implements for fiſhing. i. e. Loveſt thou me more than theſe employments, and the worldly advantage which may reſult from them? *Peter ſaith unto him; Yea,* LORD, *thou knoweſt that I love thee.* He replies, leave then theſe employments, and *feed my lambs;* the new converts to my diſpenſation of pure religion.

By thrice repeating the queſtion, how finely did our LORD hint at his former weakneſs?—How delicate the manner of

of ſuggeſting the neceſſity of future watchfulneſs, and fortitude:—And leſt Peter's quick feelings ſhould be ſeverely awakened by recollection; the painful, but neceſſary hint, was, every time, accompanied with a kind repetition of his commiſſion, as an *Apoſtle of the goſpel*, of which he had before rendered himſelf unworthy. Our LORD, who *knew what was in man*, by his generous tenderneſs, moſt powerfully touched the fine feelings of Peter's noble mind; and ſecured it to himſelf. Peter was grieved at the *third* enquiry, ſuppoſing that his beloved maſter ſtill entertained ſuſpicions concerning his fidelity; but our LORD haſtily removed his anxiety; not only by repeating his commiſſion, but alſo by informing him, that he foreſaw his future boldneſs, which would lead him undauntedly to ſuffer, even martyrdom for his ſake.

How extremely intereſting is the whole of this affecting ſcene!—The

REDEEMER ſaw it needful to caution him, againſt that vain *ſelf-confidence* in future, which had already coſt him ſo bitter a repentance; yet unwilling to add diſtreſs to pain, he delicately forbore to mention his former fault; and intermixed the richeſt comfort in that fine admonition.—And ſtill to keep him cloſely attentive to the honorable calling allotted him,—to prevent his natural volatile, and inquiſitive temper, from leading him aſtray; and proving a ſnare to him; his laſt words to him were, *Follow thou me.*—They were uttered with all the dignity of the maſter, and monitor;—with all the fervor, and tenderneſs of a friend.

And indeed Peter was *faithful to the heavenly calling*, and became a moſt undaunted champion in the cauſe of his maſter. The latter part of his life, affords the *ſtrongeſt contraſt* to his former defection.—The fear of man ſeems to have been totally baniſhed from his boſom.—

boſom.—Obſerve his boldneſs on the day of Pentecoſt.—With what a noble ſpirit, did he charge the Jews, to their faces, with having wickedly *crucified the* LORD OF LIFE!—How forcibly did he prove him to be the *promiſed* MESSIAH, and aſſert his Divine nature!—And with what a *total* indifference to all earthly conſequences, did he conclude his admirable diſcourſe, with that cutting information, *GOD hath made this ſame* JESUS, *whom ye have crucified, both* LORD *and* CHRIST!—He was now indeed a powerful, and fearleſs preacher.—*They were pricked in their hearts* with remorſe.—He exhorted them to *repent, and be baptized in the name of* JESUS.—And that *day were added to the church three thouſand ſouls.*

With the ſame boldneſs, did he miraculouſly reſtore the lame beggar, at the gate of the temple, when he went up with John to worſhip.—With a dignity that became his commiſſion, and commanded

manded the attention of the ſurrounding multitude; he ſaid, *Look on us.* And then added, *ſilver, and gold, have I none; but ſuch as I have, give I thee. In the name of* JESUS OF NAZARETH, *riſe up, and walk!* And when the people ran together into Solomon's porch, greatly wondering at what was done; how beautiful, and how forcible, was his addreſs! —How plainly did he again charge them, with having *denied the* HOLY ONE, *and the juſt;*—with having *deſired a murderer to be granted unto them;*—and with having *killed* the PRINCE OF LIFE! How did the undaunted champion aſſert the power of the name of JESUS in the moſt open, and convincing manner! *His name,* ſaid he, *through faith in his name, hath made this man ſtrong; whom ye ſee, and know; yea, the faith which is in* HIM, *hath given him this perfect ſoundneſs, in the preſence of ye all.* He reſolutely proceeded to preach *repentance;* and ſeized that moſt ſuitable occaſion, again to prove that JESUS is the MESSIAH; foretold by their prophets.

prophets. It was in vain that the Sadducees, and prieſts brought them before the Jewiſh tribunal.—How great the change!—He who before feared to acknowledge, to a ſimple ſervant girl, that he had been in company with JESUS; now declared to the *High Prieſts*, and *Jewiſh Rulers*, aſſembled in council: *Be it known unto ye all, and to all the people of Iſrael; that by the name of* JESUS CHRIST *of Nazareth*, WHOM YE CRUCIFIED, and WHOM GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD; *even by* HIM, *doth this man ſtand before ye whole. This is the ſtone, which was ſet at nought of you builders; which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there ſalvation in any other, for there is no other name, under heaven, given among men; whereby we muſt be ſaved.* Well might the rulers be aſtoniſhed at ſuch boldneſs!—It now appeared in every part of his character, and on every occaſion; witneſs the anſwer returned, when they were again called into the aſſembly: *Whether it be right, in the ſight of GOD, to hearken to you, more than to GOD;*

GOD; judge ye. Witneſs their conduct after deliverance from priſon: Behold! *they were found ſtanding in the temple, and teaching the people.* Witneſs again, the courageous addreſs of Peter, and the reſt to the council; wherein they preſſed them ſo cloſely, with plain notorious *facts*, that *they were cut to the heart; and conſulted to ſlay them.* Here is a prodigious change indeed! — Peter is now ſo far from cowardly ſhrinking from a ſuppoſed danger, that having been unjuſtly *beaten*, he *departed from the council; rejoicing that he was counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame, for the name of* JESUS.

Theſe things were written for our admonition. Not only the plain inſtructions of the goſpel, are advantageous to us; but the characters of eminent men, recorded in the ſacred volume, are alſo replete with important inſtruction, and ſhould be frequently examined. They tend to ſhew us *ourſelves*; for our reflections, are naturally turned, from their

their faults, and frailties to *our own*. Their virtues, and the brighter parts of their characters, will tend to ſtir *us* up to a holy emulation. And the ſurvey of GOD's merciful dealings with them, may well afford *us* comfort;—may increaſe *our* faith, confirm *our* hope, and quicken *our* diligence.

We have, I truſt, attentively examined the hiſtory of Peter. And that the examination may be profitable, let us uſe the preſent ſubject, as a *teſt* to try *ourſelves;* and ſee whether *we* are ſtronger than he.

Nothing is more common, than to ſpeak of Peter's weakneſs, as if it was an *unuſual* inſtance of guilty frailty. We condemn his high conceit of his own ability. Yet have not *we* too frequently indulged a ſimilar ſelf-confidence? How often have *we*, in the moſt ſerious moments, thought ourſelves ſuperior to ſuch, and ſuch temptations;

by which we have ſeen others overcome?—Reſiſtance to them has appeared to us as an effort of *no* difficulty.—We have ſtood aſtoniſhed at their faults, have paſſed the ſevereſt cenſures upon them, and (ſtrange to tell!) in a ſhort time,—perhaps in a few days; have committed the ſame ourſelves. Such is the wiſdom of man.—Such the knowledge he poſſeſſes, of his own heart.—Such his good reſolutions, when founded ſolely on his *own* ſtrength. We read the ſacred volume.—We admire the purity, and perfection of the goſpel.—We think we reverence, and love, our REDEEMER; and are ready to ſay, *Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.*—Yet how ſad the change, which a few hours has produced! Turn your thoughts backward, my brethren, and I am perſuaded, you can recollect, too many inſtances of this lamentable deluſion, and weakneſs.

What

What then!—Have *you* denied your REDEEMER?—Yes, you undoubtedly have.—Not a ſoul among you is free from the imputation.—It is readily admitted, that you have not denied him as Peter did.—You have not perhaps diſclaimed his religion.—But I read of thoſe, who *in works deny him;* nay, who even *crucify the* SON *of GOD afreſh; and put him to an open ſhame.* Such are, not only they who apoſtatize from the truth; but all *habitual*, notorious ſinners; who notwithſtanding the *great light* which JESUS CHRIST *has brought into the world; have loved darkneſs, rather than light; becauſe their deeds are evil.* Ye call yourſelves chriſtians,—followers of JESUS.—Ye imagine that ye have been initiated into his church by baptiſm. Hear then what he ſays by his apoſtle, *Let every one that nameth the name of* CHRIST, *depart from iniquity!* Have you obeyed the precept? Ah no! There are too many among you, who ſtill remain the votaries of Satan; for

his ſervants ye undoubtedly *are, whom ye obey.* I fear the SEARCHER OF HEARTS knoweth, that ye are not all free from open, ſcandalous tranſgreſſions.—I fear he ſees among ye, too many who frequently pollute his ſacred name, by irreverently joining it to a *curſe;* and perhaps *imploring* his damnation upon yourſelves, your friends, or even your children. Such is the ſtrange madneſs, ſuch the glaring impiety, of the prophane ſwearer. JESUS CHRIST has left an expreſs command: *Swear not at all.*—And yet what numbers are there, among our friends, neighbors, and acquaintance; who thus *daily* violate his command, and refuſe his authority; which is, in effect, a *denial of him.*

There are no plainer commands in the word of GOD, than thoſe againſt *lewdneſs,* and *drunkenneſs;* nor are any threatenings more ſevere, than what are denounced againſt theſe abominations. Yet are ye all clear herein?—I fear ye

are

are not.—Alas I *know* ye are not.—Theſe eyes have ſeen, with ſad concern; even ſome who call themſelves the diſciples of JESUS, when *their ſhame was manifeſt*, —when they were the dupes of *intoxication* *, and *fitted for every evil work.*— And ſurely the drunkard is one, who in works *denies the* LORD, *who bought him.* I addreſs myſelf, not only to the habitual ſot; but to all thoſe, who uſually offer the poor pleas of *company*, *mirth*, or *buſineſs;* in excuſe for occaſional tranſgreſſions. Every ſingle inſtance of drunkenneſs, is a plain flat *denial* of your REDEEMER,—inaſmuch as it is a violation of his expreſs commands; and a departure from his pure religion, which enjoins the utmoſt ſobriety, and the ſtricteſt ſelf-government; — inaſmuch as it is laying yourſelves open to every temptation; for what is it, that in the hour of madneſs, the drunkard will not commit; unleſs the providence

* Conſcience! make the application to thoſe whom it may concern.

of

of GOD, kindly keeps the occaſions of evil out of his way?—All reſtraints are ſuſpended, and he is ready *to work all uncleanneſs, with greedineſs.*

Again, ſurely the *unjuſt* are of this number. Not only thoſe who deal with deceitful weights, and meaſures; (and theſe are not a few) but all they, who in any way, over-reach, or impoſe upon their brethren. Theſe alſo are not faithful diſciples of JESUS, but in their works *deny* him; for *they will not come to the light, leſt their deeds ſhould be reproved.*

Many, nay moſt of you, my brethren, are I truſt, and believe, free from theſe enormities; but yet, I fear, it is too much to ſay, that you are quite clear of the imputation; and that ye do not frequently, either in evil works, or in the *indulgence* of corrupt paſſions, or tempers; *deny* the LORD your REDEEMER. There are the *covetous;* the *worldly-minded;*

minded; they who are *lovers of pleaſures, more than lovers of GOD.* There are thoſe who are ſlaves to their evil tempers; *proud; paſſionate; eaſily provoked; revengeful;* who can *love,* and *make a lie,* who delight in *ſlander;* and *rejoice in iniquity.* There are, I fear, all theſe among ye. And the word of GOD hath declared, that they are all the *works of the devil;* and conſequently, whoever is guilty, in any of theſe reſpects, while he bears the chriſtian name; in every inſtance *denies* his maſter. In ſhort, all they who do not continually maintain a due regard to *practical,* as well as notional religion; deny him *daily* and *habitually.* Talk no more of Peter's denial.—He *wept bitterly,* and reformed his conduct. He ever after appeared the *diſtinguiſhed* champion of his maſter;—was foremoſt to ſtand forth in his cauſe, and *perſevered to the end.* But where is the man, who has not too often denied his LORD, either by ſinful actions, or words; or a criminal *indulgence*

gence of evil thoughts? Alas! How common is it to find, among his ſincere ſervants, a want of that zeal, in his cauſe; which would be their greateſt honor. When occaſions call on them, to aſſert his commands; and reprove their brethren; they ſhrink back, as if truly aſhamed, even of the goſpel of CHRIST.

My brethren, I have dealt *very plainly* with you.—I am uſed to *plain* ſpeaking.—I ſee the *neceſſity* of it, for your ſakes; and indeed *duty* compels me to be thus faithful to your intereſts. You may think me ſevere, if I touch ye to the quick; but it is a ſalutary ſeverity: O receive it in affection.—Examine your hearts, and they will faithfully tell ye, whether ye have not, in ſome of theſe inſtances, too frequently denied even *the* LORD *who bought you, with his blood;* — who laid down his life for you.

Let

Let the time paſt ſuffice.—Now caſt away the works of darkneſs, and put on the armor of light. In the hour of vain-confidence, while ye forget your weakneſs, think of Peter.—Perhaps before a few hours are paſt, ye may deny your maſter; not once alone, but *thrice*. *Let him who thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.* Attend to the important advice of Peter, and *paſs the time of your ſojourning here, in fear*. *The Lord turning looked upon Peter*.—The ſame all-penetrating eye, is privy to all your tranſactions; is *about your bed, and about your path, and obſerveth all your ways*. Your LORD looks on ye with pity,—with regret that he ſhould have poured forth his blood in vain for you. It grieves him, to behold ye fighting againſt your BEST BENEFACTOR; and even counterworking your own ſalvation. O *turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?* Whatever ye forget, remember that the eye which caſt ſo convincing a look upon Peter, beholds you alſo. It will be the

moſt powerful check to all evil. If the fornicator, or adulterer, could reflect, amid the tumult of corrupt paſſion; that the GOD of *purity*, is ſcrutinizing his heart with deep attention, that the eye of his REDEEMER beholds, and with pity, every dark feature of his ſoul; ſurely the ſtorm would ſubſide, and he would not *commit that great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt GOD.* Would the drunkard dare to lift the intoxicating draught to his mouth, if he remembered the attention, with which he is ſurveyed by his GOD, and REDEEMER? No. —The bowl would fall from his hand, while he trembled, at the thought of that *anger*, which the LORD hath declared, ſhall *ſmoke againſt ſuch a man.* So alſo, this recollection would be the moſt powerful preſervative againſt all other evil. To enlarge as much as might be, would carry me beyond all uſual bounds. Let your own reflections ſupply the deficiency. I therefore, only

only add a ſhort word of intereſting advice.

Have we thus ſinned againſt infinite goodneſs?—Have we ungratefully denied our maſter in our works?—It is our wiſdom to follow Peter's example; —to copy his repentance. He ruſhed forth from the company, and covered his head.—*Shame and confuſion of face* belong to us. He *wept bitterly*. Let us indulge the ſalutary ſorrow, and bring to our SAVIOR, that ſacrifice of *a broken ſpirit, which he will not deſpiſe*. JESUS is equally loving unto every one of us. He will forgive, and receive every penitent offender; but O let us ſee that we remain *firm* in future; even to death; and then *bleſſed* indeed ſhall the man be, *whoſe tranſgreſſion is forgiven, whoſe ſin is covered*.

Let our repentance be ſhewn, by copying the *boldneſs* of Peter. We are

not called before tribunals, to make profeſſion of the name of CHRIST; and ſurely then, we ſhall not refuſe, to vindicate his honor, and aſſert his cauſe; whenever the perverſeneſs, or wickedneſs, of our brethren furniſh occaſions. Peter was moſt earneſtly deſirous of the ſalvation of ſouls, even of thoſe who had crucified his beloved maſter; and if we *love each other*, as he directs, *with pure hearts, and fervently;* we ſhall gladly embrace all opportunities, of furthering each others ſalvation.

It would be a flagrant deficiency, to paſs by a few beautiful particulars, in the conduct of our LORD here recited; which it is not ſufficient for us, to admire; but which alſo *claim our imitation.*

Let us well remember the *mildneſs* of his reproof, even for ſo aggravated an offence; and in our conduct, towards each other, where *a look is ſufficient;* let

let us give *nothing* more. Happy indeed would it be for the children of men, if they would learn, and generally practiſe this wiſdom!—Let us, at all times, delicately forbear to mention, that which another cannot bear without pain; unleſs there is *abſolute neceſſity;* and then, let prudence intermix ſuch tenderneſs, and ſoothing comfort; as the ſublime, and generous affection of a true chriſtian will ſuggeſt.

Let us ever be mindful, like Him, not only to forgive; but to *receive*, and *love* a *returning* offender; and if his contrition appears to be genuine, to *reſtore* him to all prudent confidence;—to treat him with generous kindneſs, and forget his failing; knowing how greatly we alſo ſtand in need of forgivenneſs.

Now ye know theſe things; happy are ye, if ye do them.

Finally,

Finally, my brethren; I repeat to you, a moſt intereſting admonition; and leave it with you, as the *laſt* and affectionate advice, of a *departing* friend. *Be ever mindful, that the eye of your maſter is continually upon you; and on all occaſions in life,* REMEMBER PETER.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

Page	Line				
24	17	for *what as much*,		read	*what will as much*
25	3	dele *the*			
41	1	for	*for them*	read	*them for*
101	1		*delightful*		*delighted*
111	8		*into*		*unto*
112	8		*bleſsful*		*bliſsful*
130	7		*their*		*your*
148	3		*ſupererogation*		*ſupererrogation*
176	10		*dependents*		*dependants*
201	12		*accomodate*		*accommodate*
212	3		*his*		*the*
254	11		*hot*		*not*
284	5		*withold*		*withhold*
287	1		*babbling*		*bubbling*
319	13		*any of*		*any part of*
332	14	after *favor* place ?			
344	13	for	*could*	read	*couldſt*
346	19		*as may*		*as it may*
349	11		ἐπιβαλοὺ		ἐπιβαλων
351	9		*woman*		*women.*

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